The CASSOWARY

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THE CASSOWARY

‘I HAVE BEEN NARROW,” SAID THE MINISTER

THE CASSOWARY

What Chanced in the Cleft Mountains

BY STANLEY WATERLOO

Author of "The Story of Ab," "The Seekers," "The Wolf's Long Howl," "The Story of a Strange Career," Etc., Etc.

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THE CASSOWARY

CHAPTER I

WHAT CHANCED IN THE CLEFT MOUNTAINS

The blizzard snorted and raged at midnight up the narrow pass west of Pike's Peak, at the bottom of which lay the railroad track, and with this tumult of the elements the snow was falling in masses which were caught up and tossed about in the gale until the air was but a white, swirling, yeasty mass through which nothing could be seen a yard away. The canyon was filling rapidly and the awful storm showed no sign of abatement. The passage was not of the narrowest at the place to which this description refers. The railroad builders had done good work in what had been little more than a gorge. They had blasted and carried away after the manner of man who, if resolute enough, must find the way. He may sweat for it; he may freeze for it, but he attains his end, as he did in forcing a passage through the vainglorious labyrinths of the Rockies. So, he had made a road between the towering heights of the Cleft Mountains. He had done well, but he had left a way so indefensible that indecent Nature, seeking reprisals, might do almost anything there in winter. Just now, with the accompanying war-whoop of the roaring blast, she was building up an enormous buttress across the King's Highway. The canyon was filled to the depth of many feet, and the buttress was growing higher every moment.

And, plunging forward from the West toward this buttress of snow, now came tearing ahead boisterously the trans-continental train from San Francisco. Its crew had hoped to get through the pass while yet the thing was possible. On it came at full speed, the big train, with all its great weight and tremendous force of impact, and plunged, like a bull with lowered horns, into the uplifting mountain of snow. It tore its way forward, resistlessly at first, then more slowly, and slower still, until, at last, it stopped quiveringly. But it was not beaten yet. Back it went hundreds of yards and hurled itself a second time into the growing drift. It made a slight advance, and that was all. Again and again it charged, but it was useless. Nature had won! Paralyzed and inefficient, the train lay still.

Then to the wild clamor of the storm was added another note. The whistle screamed like a woman. Why it should be sounded at all none but the engineer could tell—perhaps it was the instinct of a railroad man to sound the whistle anywhere in an emergency. Speaking the voice of the train, its cry seemed to be, at first, one of alarm and protest, then, as the hand on the throttle wavered, one of pleading, until, finally, beaten and discouraged, it sank sobbingly into silence, awaiting that first aid for the wounded in the case of railroad trains—the telegraph.

Upon the trains which must adventure the passes of the Rocky Mountains in winter are carried all the means for wire-tapping, that communication may be had with the outside world on any occasion of disaster at a distance from a station, the climbing spikes, the cutters, tweezers and leather gloves, and all the kit of a professional line repairer. Ordinarily, too, some one of the train crew, or a professional telegrapher, in times of special apprehension is prepared to do the work of the emergency. This particular train had all the necessary kit, but, to the alarm of the conductor and engineer and all the train crew, it was discovered, after they had met in hurried consultation, that while they had the means, they lacked the man. What was to be done? They must reach the outside world somehow; they must reach Belden, whence must come the relief train headed by the huge snowplow which would eventually release them. The conductor was a man of action: "It may be," he said, "it may be that there is some one on the train who can do the job. It's a mighty doubtful thing, but I'll find out."

He was a big, red-faced, heavy-moustached man, with a big voice, and he started promptly on his way, bellowing through each car:

"Is there anybody here who can cut in on a wire, and telegraph? Is there anybody here who can cut in on a wire, and telegraph?"

The strident call aroused everybody as he passed along, but response was lacking. He became discouraged. As he reached the drawing-room car he was tempted to abandon the idea. He hesitated, unwilling to disturb the sleepers in—or rather the occupants of the berths, for the general tumult outside had awakened them—but pulled himself together and kept on. He entered the car roaringly as he had the others:

"Is there anybody here who can cut in on a wire, and telegraph? Is there anybody here who can cut in on a wire, and telegraph?"

The curtains of one of the berths were drawn apart, and a head appeared, the head of a man of about forty years of age with clean-cut features, distinctly those of a gentleman. There was force in the aquiline nose and the strong jaw, but the voice was gentle enough when he spoke:

"I might do it, possibly. What's the matter? Stalled?"

The conductor was astounded. The drawing-room car was the last place from which he had expected or hoped assistance, but he answered promptly:

"Yes, sir," he said, "we are in a bad way, half buried in a snow mountain. We've got to reach Belden by wire, but we've no one to make the connection and send the message. If you can help us it will be a great thing. I hate to ask you. It's going to be an awful job."

"Have you got the tools?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'll try it."

John Stafford dressed hurriedly. He emerged, a straight, broad-shouldered man, possessed apparently of exceptional strength and vigor, qualities soon to be tested to the utmost. He went forward with the conductor to the car at the front, in which the trainmen were assembled. He equipped himself for the work, then, lamp in hand, he stepped out upon the platform and looked about him. He could see nothing.

He was enclosed between walls of white, the substance of which was revolving, curling and twisting uncannily. What seemed almost the impenetrable was beside him. All vision was cut off. There was but the mystery of the filled canyon. And he must venture out into that sinister, invisible space, find a telegraph pole and climb it and cut the wire and talk with Belden! The thing was appalling.

But a resolute and courageous man was John Stafford, civil engineer, and he had been building railroads in Siberia. He gave swift directions to the trainmen:

"Get together and light all the lamps you have and bring them here," he ordered; "set some of them in this window and hang some of them against it. I want the brightest beacon I can have. Keep the glass of the window clean and clear, inside and outside." Then, with a coil of wire about him, and lamp in hand, he stepped out into that wicked vastness.

He plunged into snow up to his neck. He

realized now more than ever what was the task he had undertaken. He stamped to clear as well as he could a little space about him and took his bearings. Practical railroad man, he had reasoned out his course. He had with him a pocket compass and upon this alone he relied. He knew the distance from the track to the telegraph line and knew that by going just so many yards north and then going directly east or west he would reach a pole. But the distance he could only estimate, and who could accomplish that feat with any degree of accuracy under such conditions?

Then began a fight which must remain a desperate memory with the man forever.

Straight north he began his way, plowing, digging, almost burrowing. It was fearful work, body-distressing, soul-trying. To acquire an added yard in his progress was a task. Cold as it was, he was perspiring violently in no time. The snow had begun to pack, and in the slight depressions, where it was deepest, he had even to heave his chest against it to force his way. His feet became clogged and heavy. But he floundered on. He became angry over it all. He would not be beaten! At last, as he estimated, he reached a point which must lie somewhere in the line between poles, but he was not sure. He could not judge of distance, in such a struggle. He lay down in the snow and drew long breaths and rested until the cold, checking the welling perspiration, warned him that, if he would live, he must work again.

Straight east by the compass he started, and there was renewed the same fierce, exhausting struggle, but this time maintained much longer. He kept it up until he knew he must have compassed more than half the distance—all that was required—between two poles, but he could not find one. The situation was becoming desperate. The lamp gave light for only a yard ahead, no more, because of the wall of falling snow. Back and forth he went, almost exhausted now, his heart thumping, his breath exhausted. And then, just as he was about to lie down again to a rest which would have been more than dangerous, he stumbled upon a telegraph pole. It was but fortune.

Stafford's strength returned with the finding of the pole. He would at least accomplish what he sought to do! He rested long against the pole and then began the ascent. Everything was easy now. The work in hand was nothing compared with the battle in the drift. He cut in on the wire, made the connection, talked with Belden and got assurance of instant gathering of every force at command there for the rescue. The relief train would start at once. There is sympathy and understanding and swift aid where they have learned to know the perils of the passes.

Stafford came down the pole at ease. Everything was all right now. All he had to do was to go back to the train and rest. He would follow his back track. He looked for it, but there was no back track! The densely falling snow had obliterated it completely. He fell back upon the compass again, and all the desperate work was but repeated. He was becoming faint and thoroughly exhausted now. He looked for the beacon light in the window but he might as well have tried to look through a stone wall. He feared his case was hopeless, but he did not flinch nor lose his courage. He sat down in the snow, unable for the moment to go further, and shouted with all the force of which his strained lungs were capable, but, at first, with no result. At last he thought he heard an answering call, and later he was assured of it. That revived him. He got upon his feet again and stumbled forward, following the direction of the sound. Two forms appeared beside him suddenly. They were those of the conductor and engineer. He was taken by each arm, and, staggering between the two, was lifted into the car. He was approaching a state of entire collapse, but brandy stimulated him into ability to tell of what he had accomplished. The trainmen were more than grateful. They removed his outer clothing, and, half-carrying him to his berth, left him there enveloped in a warm blanket. He was oblivious to all things in a moment, sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion.

CHAPTER II

A MAN

Weary of fighting off thoughts, tired with the insistent intrusions of memory, John Stafford, who had awakened refreshed and himself again, leaned back in his seat and gave himself up to the bitter-sweet of the home-coming after long absence. Landing from the steamer in San Francisco, Stafford had still felt himself to be in a strange country, though the people proclaimed themselves Americans of the Americans in every look and turn and voice. But the blue sky and the blue bay, the mountains and the outdoor life of the people, gave Stafford still the feeling that he was yet in a foreign land, as he had been for five years or more.

He had not counted the time from the first six weeks after his departure from America.

Across mountains, deserts, prairies, plains and rolling hills with peopled cities in their sheltering folds, Stafford held his way toward the East. He hardly knew his destination. To New York, or to stop to the central whirlpool of life in

America where goes most of what is from the West toward the outer edges of the roaring market place of the Indian name, built where the sluggish river flows, juggled by the hand of man out of the great inland Sea of Michigan into the Mississippi Valley, where it originally belonged. To one of the two cities he was indifferently bound.

Now, with eyes closed, and lips firmly and perhaps grimly set, Stafford looked the past in the face, and speculated as to the future. To him it was all undetermined. He could give it no continuous thought, for the past kept haunting him, as it had, more and more, with every mile on the way from the Pacific Coast.

His had been one of the tragedies of life and love. A strong man, upright, conscientious, brilliant and familiar with social risks, he had yet fallen in love with a married woman, the wife of a brute, an animal unsuited to her in every way, but still the wife.

It had been a love as wonderful as it was blameless. The two had met, and had involuntarily, by the mere force of a natural gravitation, been drawn toward each other, and, since they fitted, the inevitable had taken place. The very fibres of their souls had intertwined.

It was the story, old as time, of love barred by the law which men have made for good, a story the material for which exists in all lands and among all races, in all climates and under all conditions, whether it be where gather the softest of the lazy mists which float beneath the palms of the Equator or as near the North Pole as the musk ox browses. The woman unrighteously married and the man unmarried—or the reverse—will come together. Like wire of gold through armorer's bronze, a perfect cloisonné, will come, sometimes, the close relationship. And, where is the fault of loving involuntarily, helplessly, but sinning not at all? Nature is God's and has her paths, and Love is but the index finger of the two.

But John Stafford and Mary Eversham were not of the sort to violate the conscience by yielding to fond desire. The right was first with this splendid man and woman. One sweet privilege they allowed themselves, that of a full confession to each other of all that was in their hearts, and then they separated, he to seek in Russia such forgetfulness as strenuous work might bring, she to bear patiently the weight of a barren life. Now he had fought his fight in the frigid Northern Orient, and had returned, a winning American, but objectless and restless.

The man musing there gloomily at last aroused himself: "I'll think no more," he muttered; "I'll exhibit a little common sense;" and he devoted his attention to what was going on about him.

The storm had passed. As morning neared, it lessened somewhat in its force, and when daylight came, opaque and dim, it ended suddenly. The blizzard groaned and then dropped into nothingness.

It was a curious and impressive sight which was afforded those on the train as they streamed out and massed themselves upon the platforms—for those in the sleepers dressed hurriedly and came out only a little later than the occupants of the other cars, who had slight dressing to do—and it was a sight in no degree encouraging. About them was but an endless reach of dead, unenlivened dreary white, the dull white of a tombstone, and they knew that they were the helpless prisoners of this solitude. They were appalled. It affected them all, though differently, according to their character.

Food for days they had, certainly, and heat for the present. This was on the credit side.

On the other side were a variety of threatening possibilities. Weak people have died in snow-bound trains. Should they be imprisoned for long there would be no heat, and the cold in the mountains is something that seeks the very marrow. Such cold they might have to endure. Some one spoke shudderingly of a singular death caused by this bitter enemy in a train stalled years before not far from the place where they were now almost entombed, for the canyons in the rear were filled by this time and by no possibility could the train be moved in one direction or another. The story was that of the death of a wonderful little personage who, though nearly thirty years of age, was only thirty inches in height, most famous of dwarfs, the Mexican woman, Lucia Zerete. Wrap her warmly as they would, they could not save her. The frost permeated her slight body and she died upon the unheated train. The allusion brought a shudder. That awful frost in the air seeks all humanity within its limits, and then, for the more fragile, the world may no longer be going round.

The sky lightened gradually, and toward noon the clouds broke so that the sun shone for a brief space, but there came no real brightness. The sun did his best, but it was little. He was trying to send his rays to the depths of the canyon, but was not succeeding very well. He is admirable at straight work, this luminary who gives us heat and light and life—but when it comes to giving quality to rays which have to be again reflected, he is only moderately efficient. The sides of the canyon laughed at him. "You may lighten and heat our enclosed depths somewhat," they said, "but you cannot give to the canyon the real sunshine. You may be lord of our solar system, but we upheaving rocks of this particular region of this particular planet can temper your force beyond all reason!"

Incidents enough were occurring in Stafford's car. The porter, apparently a white man, and a blonde, was just ushering in a forlorn company of wayside travelers, and gave them seats in the vacant places, of which there were not a few, for travel was light on the line, these short February days of the year when the "Great Storm" burst, not here alone, but, later, upon the Atlantic States, and played with men and all their work for a day and a night, giving to the human pigmy a terrifying lesson of his own insignificance when the forces of Nature take hold in earnest to shake and tumble into fragments the cherished works of her ordinarily spoiled darling, Man.

"This car has the best accommodations, and so they are bringing the way passengers in here," the Porter explained, as he strove to make comfortable a tearful woman, whose whole being seemed to be absorbed in the effort to make the world know that she had left her two children alone at home, while she made the five-mile journey by rail to the nearest town, and back, to buy some family stores, the nature, price and quantity of which she was by no means loth to describe in detail.

"I meant to take the 'commodation," she repeated to whomsoever listened to her, "but the 'commodation didn't come, and they put me on the express, and I thought it was fine to ride on the through passenger, that never stops at our station, but I've got enough of the express, stuck all this time in the snow, and there are my poor children locked up at home."

The men fidgeted in their seats, and the women, one or two of them, went to the wayside passenger and gave her the aid, comfort and support of listening to her, as the one form of consolation possible. By no means alone was the woman in her murmurings. There were others quite as querulous and restless, particularly one man, a stormy mountain character, who was a storekeeper in the town where the complaining woman lived, and who announced that he must get home somehow and at once. The day passed miserably. The prisoners had not yet settled down into a patient acquiescence with what was.

CHAPTER III

JOHN LIPSKY'S SIGN

After supper, Stafford, feeling clamorously the need of a cigar, strolled back into the smoking compartment. It was already well filled, among the occupants being a Colonel Livingstone, a genial character with whom Stafford had already become acquainted. He was greeted warmly and seated himself to engage idly in the desultory conversation which was going on.

"I wonder what breed of Indians once inhabited this region?" queried one of the smokers. "They must have had poor picking."

"I don't know," said the colonel, "Apaches, I imagine."

A drawling voice broke in, the owner of which was a young man, a person of such self-confidence, nerve and general up-to-dateness, that Stafford whimsically christened him "The Gallus Youth."

"I know an Indian story which is true," said the Gallus Youth. "Do you want me to tell it?"

There was a general assent, the smokers subsided comfortably in their seats, and from clouds of smoke the voice proceeded, the whole group listening, or at least, if not listening, keeping silence:

JOHN LIPSKY'S SIGN

Probably nothing more strange and puzzling has ever happened, either in a great city or in the country, than what is to be told of here, and which relates to both.

When John Lipsky bought the small barber shop on South Clark street it occurred to him that he might increase his receipts a trifle by putting in a modest show-case containing cigars and cigarettes and tobacco; for Lipsky, while a man with no vices, has a large family to support and is compelled not only to economize but to devise all means for adding to the defenses against the wolf at the door. When he bought the barber shop, which contained only two chairs, he was forced to make the investment on credit, as was also the case with the cigar and tobacco outfit. He was forced also to make certain repairs inside the shop, and found himself then without money and with a business not yet established, while the little Lipskys kept on eating and wearing out clothes. He could not afford a barber's pole, though the stripes painted on the door jamb had practically disappeared under the influence of wind and weather, and, at the same time, put out a sign to make it known to passers-by that he had cigars for sale. He might afford one of the signs, but, assuredly, not both. Then to thrifty John Lipsky came a sudden inspiration. Why not combine the signs in one?

And here comes in what seems a key and yet may not be a key to happenings too remarkable for belief.

Oswald Shornstein is a sculptor working in a great establishment on the West Side. His specialty in the sculptor's art is the making of wooden Indians. Shornstein's vacation last summer was spent in Wisconsin, where he spent much of his idling time in the vicinity of an Indian settlement near Green Bay. He formed the acquaintance of a prominent member of the dwindling tribe, a tough old hunter known as Keeshamok—which, translated, means "Bounding Bear"—and they were often together, fishing and smoking and loafing throughout the pleasant summer days. When Shornstein returned to town he entertained a feeling of decided friendship for the lazy but interesting Winnebago.

The sculptor's vacation had done him good, and he plunged with vigor into his work again, the more so because the supply of wooden Indians at the time was hardly equal to the demand, and within a week he had produced a masterpiece.

Shornstein had genius, but, in this case, genius had an inspiration. Ordinarily Shornstein made just an Indian, but now it was different. It was a particular Indian which came forth from the wood in response to his practised handiwork. Fresh in the mind of the artist were the face and figure of the swarthy Keeshamok, and, almost unconsciously, he reproduced them. The work was done. There upon his pedestal stood Keeshamok of the Winnebagos!

Meanwhile what of Lipsky? He had resolved to advertise shop and cigars at one fell swoop; he would buy a wooden Indian and have him painted gloriously in colored spiral stripes from head to heel! He carried out his idea promptly and fate ordained it that the wooden Indian bought by Lipsky was the image of the Winnebago, Keeshamok. It was painted according to the barber's wildest design, and never was seen such a sign before! Holy Moses! It would have scared a wolverine! Lipsky had been wiser than he knew. From failure he had plucked success. The terrifying sign brought curious customers in scores; cigars sold rapidly and the business of the barber shop required at once another chair.

Meanwhile had come November and hunting was good in the Wisconsin woods. The Indians were alert. Keeshamok and a companion one day killed a deer and dragged it to the nearest village, where they made a sale. They staggered forth at dusk each whooping gutturally but joyously, and each carrying a mighty jug. They took the forest path for camp and pursued it weavingly but far, until, at last, Keeshamok, somewhat the drunker, proposed a camp upon the spot and consumption of firewater all through the deepening night. His companion refused and left him to his own devices.

Obtruding almost into the roadway projected the end of a mighty hollow log lying beneath a mountain of smaller logs and brush, and to Keeshamok came, as he stood there undecided, a novel vision of beatitude. There were warmth and shelter. He would creep into the log, and there, with his jug to comfort him, pass such a night as Indian never passed before! He acted on the glorious impulse.

He crawled far in and stretched himself out upon the soft, dry flakes of rotten wood and took deep draughts of whisky and defied the outside world! It was a solitary but a grand debauch. The hours passed and the Indian became almost torpid. He slept a little. The cold intensified and he awoke and drank again, but was still cold. He comprehended but dimly, yet another idea came to him. He would build a little fire and that would warm him! He scraped together a mound of the dry debris beyond him, and, after many efforts, got a match alight and applied it to the heap, which blazed at once. It warmed him. He took another drink and lay down again and slept.

There appeared next morning beside the wood road a vast gray patch of surface upon which could be seen no object larger than a hand. The ashes of the great hollow tree and of the dead trees upon it were sifting through the forest with every wind, and with them were blown the ashes of the Indian Keeshamok. He had no body!

That night something happened in South Clark Street in Chicago, something so inexplicable and startling as to pass beyond the realm of credibility. At precisely midnight, the striped Indian in front of Lipsky's barber-shop stepped from his pedestal and fled northward, without a sound. So silent and so swift his flight that those whom he met or passed felt, rather than saw, a flitting thing. The city was left behind and still northward across the frozen fields and through the woods he went. The medicine moccasins of Hiawatha never carried one more wondrously. The farms and forests of far Wisconsin were reached at last and faded by, and at last before the runner's eyes appeared the cabins of his kinsmen. What life came to him now! He bounded upward in exaltation! He burst in among the clustered habitations with the wild piercing whoop of the returning warrior!

"Owannox! wah quah-quah! Kinniwa! Wow, wow, wanny-wanny-Yook! Ek-ek! Laroo!"

Cabin doors burst open, dogs rushed forth, men and squaws dashed out and all was wild commotion. The voice of Keeshamok had been recognized on the instant. He leaped in among his people joyfully.

Then arose such yells and shrieks as made the very woodland quiver! There was a rush for cabins whose doors were closed and barred within a minute's space. The very dogs, yelping with every leap, fled to the forest. Even they were appalled and recognized but as a spectre the missing Keeshamok. Within the Indian village all was frightful silence.

With bowed head stood the striped wooden Indian in the midst of the cabins. Then he turned his face toward the south and the silent run began again. In the morning he stood once more upon his pedestal in front of Lipsky's barber shop.

How can it be accounted for? What psychologist or scientist can explain it? The spirit of Keeshamok lacks, of course, the usual form in which to reappear and do any haunting anywhere, for good or evil, since his body was consumed entirely. Does it seek the marvelous imitation made by Shornstein as the only substitute? Who, indeed, shall say? There are many things unknown to us.

And still, each night, the striped Indian runs his futile race and makes his sad return.

CHAPTER IV

A SPECIAL PROVIDENCE

Daybreak of the second day of imprisonment brought no renewal of the storm, though the sun was hidden and the clouds were dark and lowering. But the morning was to have its tragedy.

The storekeeper who had got on at the station five miles back seemed half demented. He had chafed and grumbled loudly from the first, asserting that his business would be ruined without his immediate presence and attention, and heaping imprecations upon the weather and the railroad company alike. Patience or philosophy seemed entirely lacking in his character. All through the first day of detention he had paced restlessly back and forth throughout the train, a walking expletive, and now he had become furious.

"I must get home," he shouted; "I live only five miles down the track and I'm going to walk it. I know these blizzards, and I'm bigger than any of 'em! I can make it!" and he would have leaped from the train at once had not strong hands restrained him. He went forward mutteringly.

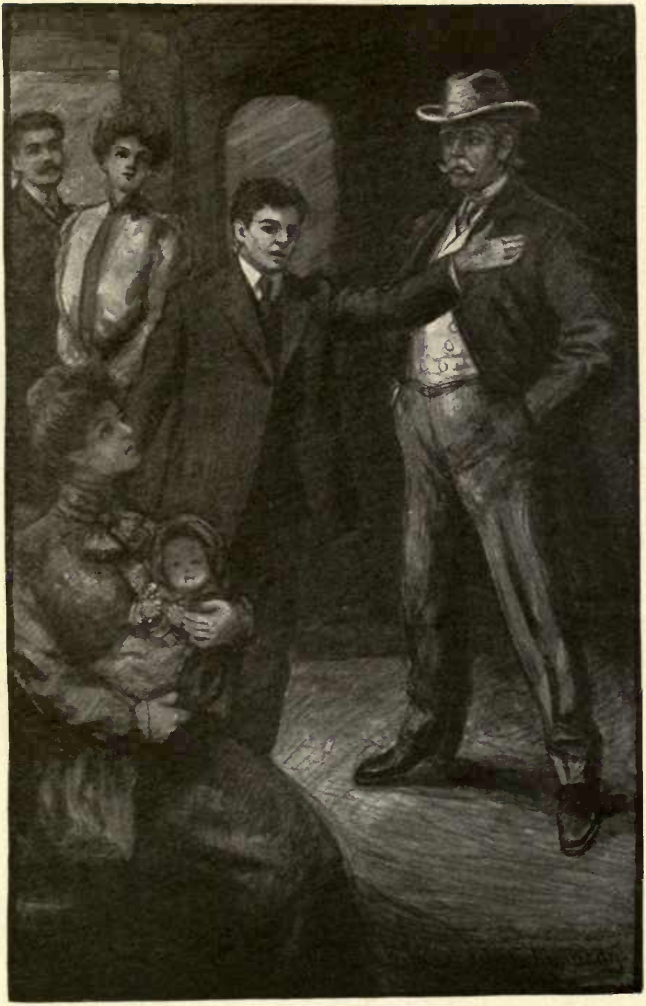
The stillness of all the world about had something to it sinister and threatening. It was like the silence of a graveyard. "I'd rather have that storm howling again, and howling worse than ever," said one of the passengers, "than endure this ghastly quiet. It's altogether too quiet. Something is going to happen!"

He was right. Something was going to happen. The dark clouds were sinking nearer and nearer to the earth, and at last there came a sound, the faintest of sighs, of the coming wind. It deepened steadily until it became more than a sigh; it was a moan. It increased in volume. The moan became a shriek, the shriek a mighty roar, and the blizzard, with its snowfall, was raging about the pass again.

The passengers crowded together at the windows and a few of the more hardy even ventured out upon the platforms to enjoy, or to become apprehensive over, the mighty spectacle.

They were thus engaged when there came rushing excitedly into the car the pert youth who had told the remarkable Indian story the night before.

"The Storekeeper!" he exclaimed. "The Store-



"THE STOREKEEPER!" HE EXCLAIMED

keeper is missing! He must have left the train!"

There was aroused a sudden and alarmed interest, followed by a hurrying of men to the different platforms, but there was nothing to be seen. The man must have slipped from the train, unobserved, before the recurrence of the storm and made the desperate attempt to reach his home by the exercise of sheer bull-dog tenacity and brute force, in struggling through the enormous drifts. Stafford, accompanied by two of the trainmen, made a brief but arduous and difficult search for some distance, but found slight trace of the missing passenger. Close beside the train they discovered where he had leaped off and staggered uncertainly forward, but beyond that there was no sign. The snow had already hidden the reckless being's trail.

There was a sequel, long in coming. Late in the following spring, when the looming drifts of the pass had melted, the mortal part of the Storekeeper was found some distance from the track, where he had stumbled blindly in his wanderings. But of his fate there could, of course, at this time, be no certain knowledge. There was even a chance, some thought, that he might accomplish the seemingly impossible. The men muttered to each other, and that was all. Why the Storekeeper, apparently one possessed of shrewdness at least, should have taken such awful risk no one could say—but it made swift tragedy.

Communication had been maintained with Belden. A path to the telegraph pole utilized by Stafford on the night of the stoppage had been laboriously dug by the trainmen and Stafford had again made the connection and learned the condition of affairs with the rescuing party already started. The report was not altogether encouraging. The vast fall of snow in the canyon, drifted, in some places, higher than the top of the smokestack of the locomotive—for this was the greatest blockade in the history of the road—had proved more than baffling, even with the snow-plow. Scores of men were at work ahead of it with shovels, in the work of bringing the clearance within the range of its capability. The relief train was yet many miles from the one entirely helpless. Still the snow would not be so deep at points ahead, where the canyon widened, and the belief of the rescuers was that the half-entombed would be reached at some hour of the fourth day of their detention. The news was not received with any degree of exultation.

It was at this crisis that Moses appeared to lead those in the Cassowary and their visitors out of the gloom oppressing them.

When men and women of intelligence and brightness and modern perception are cast together in an emergency, there ever appears among them some one who brings the group close together. He may not be the greatest of the group, but he has some dominant instinct in him involving a regard for the comfort of others. Such a man was Colonel Livingston.

The Colonel was a man of thought, and he wanted his own sort of people around him. He had raised a regiment once, when fierce things were going on in the "60's," and he knew how to gather men. He had ranged through the train, like some good-naturedly overbearing Lord High Commissioner selecting those whose appearance most appealed to him and, because of his keen acumen and genial approachment, had captured easily and brought into the Cassowary those whom he thought would swing best into being a healthful and merry part of the fraction of humanity enduring temporary distress. He had an idea.

The occupants of the Cassowary included a number of the more than ordinarily intelligent and cultivated—as would naturally be the case in such a car and on such an extended trip—and all had, by this time, become more or less acquainted, though all had not, like the Colonel, acquired the fancy of addressing others by the title of their occupation. It was to such a group as this that the Colonel, standing at one end of the car, addressed himself:

"I'm afraid that we are flunking a little. I know—I feel it in my bones—that we are going to escape from this cold dilemma without any serious consequence, but we shall not be a credit to ourselves if we falter in the interval. Let us avoid depression. Let us enliven the situation as much as possible. To such end I have a suggestion to make in this connection which, I hope, may be well received. Last night I was much interested in a story told by the buoyant and blithesome young gentleman occupying the end seat on the left side there"—and he indicated the "Gallus Youth"—"and it has come to my mind since that we may greatly relieve the monotony of our case by doing what we do in the smoking compartment, that is, by telling stories. If you consent, I will modestly offer myself as a sort of master of ceremonies. Does the idea meet with any degree of approval?"

There was no dissent, but, instead, a hearty agreement to the proposition, the Colonel's cheery manner having its effect on everybody. For a time, though, the story-telling did not begin.

There was need, certainly, for any and all suggestions as to means for ameliorating in any degree a situation the grimness of which was beginning to force itself upon even the most optimistic of the company. The wind, even when it lowered its tone for a moment, growled ominously.

"It is awful," moaned the woman with the baby. "I wonder how God can let such things happen. I wonder if praying would help?"

Then followed—it could hardly be otherwise with such a company—reverent but earnest discussion of the question of whether or not Providence ever really intervened in special cases, as a result of special supplication. Varying opinions were expressed, the majority, even the most seemingly devout, inclining to the belief that the answer to the question was beyond the knowledge accorded to humanity. It was the Colonel's opportunity. He appealed to the Minister, who had listened to the discussion with a thoughtful smile upon his kindly face, but who had not given an opinion.

"Do you believe in special providences, sir?" he asked. "Can you relate a single instance in your experience, or one of which you have heard, from a reliable source, where there has been the manifestation of what we call 'a special providence,' in direct answer to prayer?"

"I cannot answer your question," was the Minister's reply. "I cannot answer the first part of the query, because I am undecided, and I cannot answer the second because the same reasoning would, in a way, apply, since I am not entirely assured of certain earthly facts. But," and there was a twinkle in the reverend gentleman's eyes, "I heard a curious story once, for the exact truth of which I will by no means vouch, which I will tell in the narrator's own words, and which, supposing it to be true, might be looked upon as either for or against the doctrine of

A SPECIAL PROVIDENCE

Just who are the "salt of the earth" is a disputable question. The title belongs traditionally to a group of that splendid race—the Jews. But it is claimed, also, and on seemingly excellent grounds, by other groups, including a large number of the people of Iowa. Appearances are in their favor, for Iowa was settled by a fine lot of men and women, and their children have not deteriorated.

They were excellent pioneers who came to cross the great river and make a new State, to cut away the forest where it was too dense, to plant trees where the prairie-planted farmhouses and barns needed shelter from wintry blasts, to import cattle, and horses, and sheep, and hogs with blood in them, and to repeat the old exploit of the dominating race in making, somewhere, the desert blossom as the rose. About what is Maxonville alighted one of the groups of men and women, settling down like wild geese upon an area of fertile and well-watered land. Maxonville was not much in evidence when they came, these strong men and women, for only "Old Man" Maxon was living at the forks where the big creek found the little river; but they all settled about, and there were built new homes close to Maxon's, and there came, as the years passed, a church, and a schoolhouse, and a grocery and dry goods store, and, in time, the prosperous town. The farmers round about prospered, for they had thrift and intelligence and something of the old Covenanters' spirit.

The church Maxonville built, offhand and ready for all its uses before they had a preacher, was a pride to the sturdy men and believing women, and when the preacher came to them from the East they were more satisfied than ever.

There may be something in lonely farm work making one a grim adherent of straight creed. Down behind horses and plow all day long, with only the great blue sky of God above, and only a view of the same sky meeting a green horizon far away and all around; inclosed in this great vault of blue and green, and left alone with one's thoughts, it may be that the eternal problem becomes more earnestly considered, more a part of all the thought and life of a human being than it is to the man of the city, who has his attention distracted every moment from the great, overwhelming presence and pressure. Such effects crystallize. The people of Maxonville and its vicinity were sternly devout—that is, most of them—and their new minister was a fit exponent of their creed.

The minister was tall, dark-haired, clean-shaven, and with brown eyes which were keen, chiefly, in looking into himself. He had a stern, well-defined mission in religious teaching—as earnest as Ignatius Loyola, stubborn as Oliver Cromwell. He had been through college, and then through one of the strictest of theological schools. He was fit to preach, he felt, as far as mere acquirement of having learned the ways of other preachers; but he knew that the ideas of the world were changing, and that if the world were changing God must be doing it, and so he was at times perplexed. But he came to his little land of prairie flowers, and steer-raising, and honest obstinacy, a fit man for the place. And they said they had a preacher!

It is doubtful if any village of three hundred people in the United States, from Montpelier to San Diego, from Portland to St. John, has not one pretty girl or more. Maxonville had a number of pretty girls, and one of them was more than pretty; she was beautiful.

Deacon Conant was the leading man of the church of the new town. He was a man who had succeeded, because of brains and energy, in managing his two or three farms, but he does not figure in this account save that he was the father of Jane Conant. His blood had gone into her, and it was pretty good blood, too. The preacher had fallen in love with her and she with him. Preachers and girls would not be good for much if they did not do that sort of thing occasionally.

Here was an ideal relation of things, or what should have been an ideal one. What could have been finer than that there should have come into a growing town in a growing region a stalwart, almost fanatical builder-up of faith, who should find a fitting partner in the daughter of the chief man of the locality, and that from the union so buttressed all around should come great results? There was but one obstacle in the way of this perfect combination, and the obstacle was in the woman. It is astonishing how women will nibble at apples and learn things, from Eve down! This particular young woman had graduated from one of the most cleverly conducted of Eastern colleges for girls, and she had views. Not only did she have views, but she had views in the face of her religious teacher, of the man whom she respected for his earnestness and loved for himself. They were intensely happy for a while after their engagement—as becomes strong souls getting close together in such relationship—but with nearer relationship came necessarily more vehement and unguarded interchange of thought, and—sad the day!—they differed seriously, upon a matter of belief.

A part of the belief of John Elwell, the preacher, was an implicit confidence in the manifestation at times of what we call a "special providence." One of the ideas of the young woman, deeply religious though she was, was an utter disbelief in this same thing—that is, a disbelief that God sometimes makes an exception, and, instead of working through the laws of the Nature which He has instituted, produces a direct result having the quality of what we are accustomed to call a miracle.

The two discussed the matter together very often after they came close together, as lovers may. The first time they debated there came a little wedge between them as thin as tissue paper abraded to an end. Next time the wedge grew larger, and where it ended there was a cleft reaching down to anywhere. The third time there was a split broad and well defined, and the engagement was broken.

"My dear, I do believe in special providences; I do believe that earnest prayer will bring results in certain cases, justifiable in themselves."

"I do not."

"Why?"

"Because I believe that the whole thing—and I am only a girl talking, I don't know what you call it—is just a belief and taken on trust. What would you think of going down to the mill there and praying the miller to make one bag of flour coarse in the midst of all his business? The miller is giving us bread for our physical life, and he knows best how to do it, at least as compared with the rest of us. I know that this is all a poor simile, a poor comparison, but I can't help it."

Now, even an earnest preacher is human, and a great many girls—though the healthy among us call them angels—are human. The engagement between the two was at this juncture broken off so squarely that the ends weren't even ragged, though there was left a possible sequence, not altogether black as midnight—a vague hope in the heart of each that the future might have something to it. This brought a few words more before they parted.

Said the girl: "Show me a case of special providence and I will believe with you. It must be—it cannot possibly be otherwise—than that there should in some way, somehow, come an opportunity for showing that you are right and I wrong."

The pale-faced man's eyes were burning as he looked at her.

"The day will come!" he said.

Time passed and the two worked together in social and church relations, but there was no more talk of marriage. It was one day in mid-July, a year after the conversation just described, when John Elwell was talking earnestly from his pulpit, and Jane Conant was one of the congregation.

The preacher talked well that day—there is no denying it. He talked in a simple, straightforward but wonderfully eloquent way of how the quality of one's relation to others in this world must make easy or uneasy the path toward what is the better habitation after death. He told of the duties of the successful to the unsuccessful, of the strong to the weak; and he told too, of how, even in this world, each man's mind is accuser or justifier, and how, even in this world, come rewards and punishments, and how to him with faith enough should come immediate returns. With glowing face he even went aside a little to speak of those who talk too much of Nature and the Universe, and who believe that a general scheme is as true and strong and believable as one more definite—" 'He noteth the sparrow's fall,' " he said.

It was sultry within the church, and all seemed lifeless, though hearts were beating rapidly under the preacher's eloquence. There seemed no oxygen in the air; all was oppressive. There was no sound as the speaker closed a long and telling sentence, save the slight "swish" as a locust alighted on the sill of an open window. There was sound enough a moment later.

Through the open doorway leaped a young man who shouted but one word:

"Cyclone!"

At the exclamation breaking in thus on the religious stillness perhaps one-fourth of the congregation started to their feet and rushed into the open air, but the three-fourths remained in their seats as if paralyzed. The preacher paused, looked about, and then with almost shining face spoke solemnly:

"My friends, we are threatened with one of the visitations which God sometimes decrees, but which, it is my earnest belief, cannot harm those who believe in Him rightly and appeal to Him most trustingly. Let us pray that the cyclone will avoid this church."

They knelt together, preacher and congregation, and strong and trustful and appealing was the pastor's prayer. His clear voice did not falter in the eloquent appeal, and those who knelt felt confidence and a glorified pride in the attitude taken in an awful hour. Men came rushing to the doorway crying aloud upon all within to make the attempt at escape to a safer place, but there was no response, no sound save that of the preacher's uplifted voice. There was a roar and rumble in the far southwest and a half darkness was approaching. As the sound outside increased, the voice of the preacher became less audible, but the spellbound and trusting congregation did not move. Among the women was still Jane Conant.

The rumble became a roar, the roar an ear-splitting, paralyzing blast, and then—chaos! In blackness, with its steeple, its roof, its whole upper part torn away and leaving but an uncovered brick rectangle, ten or fifteen feet in height, remained what was of the church in

Maxonville. With the blackness came a torrent; the interior of the rectangle became a flooded space, within which area men and women waded, and floundered and shouted, and shrieked, and felt for each other, and feared, almost, that the world was ended. Then gradually, the flood ceased, and daylight came again, and the drenched creatures within what was left of the church—by what seemed a miracle there had been none injured—emerged upon the greenery about. Among them was the preacher. He spoke to no one. He had worn a straw hat when he came to the church, and had found it somehow. It had been wetted and crushed, and now hung down on each side of his head grotesquely. He was a sodden, queer creature who looked neither to the right nor to the left. But there was thought in him still. He lifted his face to Heaven, and thanked God that all had been preserved, but said no other word. He walked drippingly along the sidewalk and then turned down a lane which led into the country.

Barely one-fourth of a mile—estimated conventionally as the crow flies—from the town of Maxonville was the farm of John Dent. It was not a large farm; it was, in fact, but a quarter of a quarter-section, which means forty acres; but acres have nothing to do with ideas. John Dent, though he had only a little farm, worked hard and lived reasonably well, and had a standing, and knew the preacher well, and debated one important question with him frequently. It was this same question of special providence, and the attitude of John Dent was, though in a man's way, identical with that of Jane Conant, the preacher's lost sweetheart. The preacher wondered at this sometimes. He wondered how it was that this gifted girl and this obstinate, deep-thinking farmer should so chance to decide alike. Of course all this was before the cyclone.

Down at the bottom of his heart John Dent was a little sentimental. His father and mother had come to the small farm before him. They were dead now, as well as certain sisters and brothers, and they were buried in a little private graveyard on the farm, around which the beeches grew thickly and from which the ground sloped gently into a laughing creek. There was not much surplus left at the end of each year of the product of John Dent's farming, and the surplus had more channels for immediate and demanding distribution than it could supply, still John Dent thought that some day he would put up a neat little brick monument in that graveyard—a somewhat unusual form of monument—but that was Dent's idea. He was going to have a pyramidical thing about fifty feet high. The spire of the church at Maxonville was of brick, hollow of course, welded solidly in its weather-hardened cement, as if it were a monolith of stone.

The cyclone had passed. A preacher had gone down a lane thinking the thoughts which come to a clean Christian man in a surprising and dispiriting emergency. A fair young woman had gone home crying over what was where her heart was, and Mr. John Dent had seen a cyclone come and miss his place by about forty rods, and had also seen an out-flinging and eccentric wing of that same cyclone deposit, just in the proper place in the burying-ground of his family, a perfect pyramid monument, such as he had been dreaming of for the last quarter of a century. It was all queer and out of the common, and was hard to explain; it is not attempted here, for this is only the story of what happened within an hour or two on a certain afternoon in Iowa.

This is going back to the preacher. He

walked fast and he walked far, and found himself deep in the country. He was at least honest in all he thought; he was a good man, yet he was troubled to the depths of his being. "I have prayed to God," he said to himself, "and He has refused me. The cyclone didn't turn away from the church! Is the woman I love right, and am I wrong? Is there a broader and greater scheme of being wherein I should be a trusting and unquestioning instrument rather than one who demands as a special suppliant? I will see Jane," he said in his great strait. "I feel that she may aid me."

He met the woman that night; he went to her house and found her there, and found, too, that as she was, being a dear woman, she had just then but vague views either on special providences or anything else in particular, all being absorbed in anxiety as to his own health and welfare. She was but a loving, frightened creature, harried over what might have happened to the man who through all the months of silence and separation had been all there was in the world to her. He had come half intending to admit himself all in error, but soon all had been lost in the mere performance of a man and a woman blending. And the evening passed. Then when the next day came, the two, now understanding, walked out into the country.

It was in that wonderful hour of the summer sunset, when all the world is filled with light and the heavens are tinted with opalescent colors from an unseen source, and some vagrant vesper sparrow is still singing, that John Elwell and Jane Conant stood in John Dent's little family graveyard, looking soberly at the transplanted church steeple. It stood there, its base ranged plumb east and west, north and south, as if calculated with all the niceties of the Ancient Order; at its foot the quiet grass-grown graves, while all around stretched clover meadows and the cornfields.

"I feel like borrowing a phrase from the Mohammedans," said the minister, "or just the beginning of one, then saying no more: 'God is great!' "

The girl's summer bonnet hung back over her shoulders, its pink strings loosely tied under her chin. She looked comprehendingly at the minister, but she said nothing.

"I have been narrow," continued the minister, "but God is great."

Coming across the clover field they saw

John Dent, and the two went to the white picket fence around the graveyard, which he had built and cared for, and stood at its little gate to meet him.

"Mr. Dent," said the minister, when he had shaken the farmer's hand, and as they all turned to look at the steeple top, "I have had a lesson, and I must acknowledge that it was needed. Our vision is limited, and we often know not even how to pray! I am content to leave all to God, nor to wrestle for His special interposition in my behalf. The doctrine of special providences is presuming—of the earth, earthy. I see that now."

"Well, I don't know," said John Dent; "I didn't exactly pray for it, but I've always wanted a monument to my folks here. Sometimes I thought it was vain and worldly minded in me, but I couldn't give it up. I wanted that monument just about as high as the end of the steeple stands, just about that shape, too, more than anything in this world. I couldn't see my way clear to getting it. I couldn't afford to build one—and here it is! I don't know as I quite agree with you now parson, concerning special providences!"

It was just before the conclusion of the

Minister's story that a lady entered quietly from the next sleeping car and was welcomed to the coterie by two or three of the ladies, who had, evidently, met her. Stafford looked in her direction and their eyes met. Then, all the world changed!

They knew each other on the instant, but beyond the slightest of inclinations of their heads, there was no sign of recognition. There was no smile. There was but an almost startled look which changed into one of comprehension and then of the ready trust which was of the past. What message that lingering mutual glance conveyed neither could have told entirely—it was doubtful, hopeful, appealing, understanding.

As the minister ceased talking, and comment began, Stafford rose and made his way toward the new arrival. He had but neared her when Mrs. Livingston took him by the arm:

"Have you met Mrs. Eversham yet, Mr. Stafford?"

They clasped hands, and his head swam, it seemed to him: "I did not know that you were on the train," he said.

"I have been slightly ill," she answered gently, "and have been confined to my stateroom most of the time since leaving San Francisco, but I am well again. It is good to be out."

Then their attention was demanded by others and they were separated. But, what a flavor to the world now!

CHAPTER V

THE FAR AWAY LADY

They called her the "Far Away Lady"—those on the train who had already met her. Just why the name was bestowed by some one with imagination and aptness of expression or why it had been so readily adopted by the others, perhaps none could have clearly told, but it had its fitness. There was a certain soft dignity and reserve of manner and a "far away" look in the eyes of this stately, but certainly loveable human being. She possessed the subtle distinction there is to women of a certain sort, impressing those about her in spite of themselves, as years before, she had impressed John Stafford. As has been told he knew her on the moment, yet in their words was nothing, and, even as they met, they had not looked into each other's eyes unless, it may be, with a hungering furtiveness and a dizziness at the marvel of the meeting.

It is hard to describe the Far Away Lady. Her face was exquisite in its pure womanliness, but in its expression was something which told of a life unfilled. It was not a protest; it was too good for that, but it seemed to suggest with this woman a bewildered resignation. The face was one which, in other times, might, before the end, have been turned toward and found the cloister. Yet there was all of modern living and appreciative conception in it. A smile came to the lips at certain incidents of the story-telling, and interest showed in the soft eyes at the relation of some striking episode. There was intelligence as there was sad sweetness in every feature of the lovely face. Yet there remained always in the look that quality, not of listlessness, but of abstraction. It was a face as fascinating as it was appealing.

In her own stateroom the Far Away Lady sat at her window, but seeing no whirling snow, hearing not the plaint of the dying wind. She was detained in no cold and rugged canyon. Her thoughts were far away.

About her was no scene of pallid desolation. She looked instead, upon the blue waters of a great calm lake, the wavelets of which splashed at her feet, while about her all was sunshine. Seated beside her on the rustic bench was a man, one strong, tender and trustworthy, and they were about to part, as they thought, forever. Very sad was the man, almost a weakling for the moment, though talking lightly in an effort to distract her mind from what was near, blundering and only nurturing their mutual sorrow, by indulging in foolish fancies of what might have been.

He was smiling by force of will as he looked across the waters toward the invisible other shore and dreaming aloud:

"We would build a house upon some high wooded out-jutting point upon the other side," he said, "a house, it might be, most unpretentious, as near the southern end of the lake as practicable, so that we would be conveniently near the city. It might be of almost any material and be a sort of bungalow or even only what they call a "shack," but comfort would be in and all about it and happiness within its walls. It would face the lake with an outlook on all its moods, its bright placidity or its rage in storms, and there would be white sails and the passing steamers and all that pertains to those who go down to the sea in ships. And the sun would make yellow bars on the blue in the morning and in the evening we would see it go down into the water red and 'big as a barn,' and there would be a crimson pathway from us to it, and when the summer darkness came, we should sit happily together, listening to the voices of the night, the katydids and the whippoorwills and all the other things. Then we would be waked in the morning by the sunlight again and the songs of all the wild birds instead of by the whistles and the noisy chattering of city sparrows.

"And the house would have a big front room with a mighty fireplace in the winter, and the windows would be made wide and high so that ever in the daytime there would be light—more light—and there would be lamps a-plenty to make it light when the dark changed into blackness. And about the sides of all this big room there would be cases with many books and in the center of a great table, with all the magazines and everything of passing interest. There would be chairs, cosy, indolent chairs, to dream in, and light ones and business-like ones, and a great couch with many cushions.

"Outside you should have your garden, the flowers you love so, and in the wood there would be a fountain, fed from the lake by a windmill, where the birds could drink and bathe and quarrel and mate, and where we could watch and study them. You would become as wise as Linnæus and I as Burroughs.

"And there will be dogs,"—unconsciously he changed the tense—"What is home without a dog! and about the Shack we shall have no limitations. We'll have as many as we want; there'll be an Irish setter, soft-eyed and chestnut-coated, the perfect gentleman among dogs; there'll be a bull terrier, bright and loving; there'll be a collie, wisest and most observing, and, possibly, a toy dog, for your plaything at times, when you are tired of me. And, finally, there will be a bulldog, a creature of such aspect as to give a ghost or burglar spasms, a monster in appearance, though kind at heart, a thing so hideous as to have a baneful beauty, with massive bow legs, wide apart, bloodshot and leering eyes and a countenance generally like that of a huge fanged toad. And all of these too shall be dogs of lineage, Hapsburgs among dogs, and I will give each of them to you when a puppy, so that you may rear them yourself and they will become your adoring vassals and protectors. Eh, but you will be well guarded, and I shall feel more at ease when I am away from you, riding over to town for the mail or to get a lemon or two.

"And what friends we will have, not the casual, conventional, flitting friends alone, such as some might be content with, but those closest to us because of that which cannot be defined but which exists, and, besides them, perhaps less close but hardly less companionable, others of tastes and inclinations like our own, and who will riot or rest as suits them in the atmosphere about us. They will be the brothers and sisters of the time, and there will be doings both whimsical and wise. There will be a rendezvous for those who know—our author friends, our artist friends—what a lot of them are ours!—and our musical friends, to give an added and different flavor. What a piano you'll have! I'll get the one used by David and Miriam and Orpheus and Apollo and St. Cecelia and Liszt and Mrs. Zeisler—if I can. Never mind the anachronisms and solecisms—and we'll let them 'sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea,' or rather o'er Lake Michigan, or engage in any other fantasies appropriate to Arcady—land fifty dollars an acre—and, at times, we will, no doubt, be unentitled to call our souls our own .

"And—so well do I know you—there will be often there some of those whose lines are not cast in the pleasant places and to whom such freedom from care, and such taste of home and real companionship about them will be like an outing in the outskirts, at least, of Paradise. And we'll try to deserve the Shack! Yes, we'll deserve it all the time—when buds are bursting, when the green leaves hide the oriole in the maple, when the maple's leaves are red, and when there are no leaves, and the fireplace is doing its winter's roaring. What a home it will be! Ah, my girl, we'll"—but the sorrowful jesting failed him, and he said no more. Then came the parting.

And now the dreaming woman's thoughts reverted to the present. She could see the snow and hear the wind and realize existent things. How strange it was! Years had passed and he and she were together again, he drifting from another hemisphere, sterner faced, perhaps, but still the same, and she, changed too, she thought, but doubtless to less advantage. She felt rebellious. The world was lost. To him and her could never come in life the close comradeship which is the crown of things, the right to share good and ill alike, and meet the future, shoulder to shoulder, laughingly in the enduring love which can become so sublimely a part of two souls that it is a part of immortality.

And in the next car Stafford, too, was sitting alone and thoughts very like those of the woman were in his mind. But he was far less patient. His bonds were chafing him.

CHAPTER VI

THE LIFE LINE

There were smiles before comment began, as the minister finished his odd story, which, as everybody seemed to feel, was told rather to distract attention from the outlook in the present strait than as having any serious application to the theme under discussion, and, for a time, there was a departure from the subject. The wind still howled outside, but the cold did not increase perceptibly. A more cheerful feeling had obtained and the situation was now looked upon by most of the prisoners as but one of the extraordinary incidents of Rocky Mountain travel.

The one woman had retired to her own car and Stafford, after a season of wild imagining, had returned to earth again. He sat looking upon the scene with a degree of interest.

Experienced and toughened man of the world as he chanced to be, he was not lacking in keen sympathies, and he wondered, as he studied the faces about him, how the test would be endured should the car be no longer heated and the supply of food become exhausted before aid could reach them? He had been snowbound before, and he knew the more than uncomfortable possibilities of the case. There might be a more continued fall of snow than any one anticipated. The howl of the wind had subsided a little and was no longer so menacing in tone, but rather whistled and muttered, as it tossed the masses of snow about. It seemed to Stafford as indicating no increased fierceness of the storm but, instead, more snow. The man who has experienced much of climes and seasons learns to recognize a prophecy in the voice of the wind and to set his house in order accordingly. In this case, Stafford had much rather have heard the wind still giving utterance to its wolf's howls. Howls and bluster were nothing, but an addition to the difficulties of the relief train was what was most to fear. So Stafford did not like the wind's more whimpering tones. The other passengers, with the exception of a grizzled miner, and perhaps, a few others who had long known the Storm King personally, appeared delighted at any abatement of the turmoil outside. To them, lack of noise was proof of lack of peril.

It was the Colonel, that fine combination of Colonel Newcombe, Mr. Macawber and an up-to-date retired American army officer, who gave direction to the course of events again, as the discussion went on idly. He broke in:

"What the minister told us regarding what was or was not a special providence relieved us, certainly, for it gave us a conundrum, and conundrums distract the mind, but we must keep the distraction up. Have there been no other providential dispensations?" He turned to the miner, whom he chanced to know well:

"Here, Jim, you who have been so long in the mountains, ought to be able to tell us of escapes which seemed purely providential. Don't you know of any such affair?"

The miner, who was diffident, and who, furthermore, spoke in mountain phrase and with a queer stutter, tried to say that he really did know of one such case, and the Colonel forced him to tell the story. Translated into English—for it was with difficulty that the miner was understood, and the Colonel, who was familiar with the account, gave most of it—this is the story of what happened to a man and wife, not altogether tenderfeet, in the hills, and what was accomplished by

THE LIFE LINE

Robert Felton was in luck when he met an Eastern girl in Salt Lake City. He was from Chicago and she from Boston. An inveterate sportsman was Felton and each autumn when he came out to visit a mine in which he was interested the trip terminated with a hunting expedition which extended sometimes to the very edge of the time of storms and snow. Once or twice he and his companions had been nearly caught snowbound in the mountains and he had acquired experience, not perhaps sufficient.

He met a tall bronze-haired, gray-eyed Catherine Murdoch who was on a visit from the East—and that settled it. He fell in love a thousand feet and wooed with all the vigor and persistency he might have exhibited after elk or bear. It didn't take long. The splendid advance of the tempestuous hunter-miner, business man, as cultivated as she too, somehow fascinated the frigid beauty and she yielded in almost no time. They met in June, were married in September and spent the winter and spring and summer in Chicago. Then, with approaching autumn, came again upon Felton the mountain fever, and he proposed the usual Western trip. He was in love as deeply as ever and he was a considerate man.

"We'll go to Salt Lake City," he said, "and I'll attend to my business—it's all in town there—and then, dear, you'll let me make a hunting trip, won't you, while you stay in the city and have a good time with Mary." Mary was Mrs. Felton's cousin.

"Where do you hunt, Bob?" inquired Mrs. Felton.

"Oh, generally away up a canyon which forks from one where a couple of my friends have a mine. I've had a sort of shack built away up on the side of this branch canyon, which is about five miles across country from the mine, and, every fall, they send over a stock of provisions—canned goods and flour, and sugar and tea and coffee—and come over themselves when they can and hunt and fish with me. It will be a little late this year."

"What sort of a place is this shack of yours?"

"It's fine. There are a cook stove and table and three chairs and a bed. There's a window, too, and there's a lithograph of Li Hung Chang tacked up on the wall. It's just voluptuous—makes you think of the Taj Mahal on the outside and the boudoir of a Sultan's favorite in the inside. It's a dream."

"Bob, I'm not going to stay in Salt Lake City. I'm going hunting with you."

"What?"

The tone of the lady became just a shade pleading:

"Why not, Bob?"

"Madam, you're an honor to my home but in a shack in the mountains you would be like La Cigale. Out of your fitting clime and place and your own sweet season, you would perish as do the summer insects. So go the ephemera. Why, dear, up in the shack there, it's only hunting, and fishing, and climbing or falling and washing tin dishes and eating and sleeping as sleep the dead and then doing the same things over again. You're no jewel for such a setting."

The charming lady hesitated for a moment and then spoke very thoughtfully and earnestly though, it must be admitted, with a certain degree of cooingness.

"Bob, I'm afraid I've been negligent, perhaps criminally secretive—but I have failed to make clear to you one side of my character. I wish you to understand, sir, that I have been in the Adirondacks, season after season, that I can swim like a duck, that I can cast a fly and that I can shoot tolerably well. Furthermore I can cook almost anything in a tin dish. Am I not going with you, Bob?"

There was some astonishment and a whoop, certain excusable demonstrations and, two weeks later, his business concluded in Salt Lake City, Felton and his wife were up in the cabin in the mountain and the nickel had been fairly dropped in the Western slot.

It is wonderful when a man is afield with a man companion who understands both him and the woods. It is more wonderful still when the companion is a woman and the creature closest to him and understands all things, as well. His old friends of the mining camp—came over and hunted with him as usual and that fair veneered barbarian cooked famously for them, like a laughing, chaffing squaw and added two more to her list of her fervent admirers. Never were such happy days for Felton as when he fished or hunted with his wife. Woman who well knew the mountains, wise as well as beautiful woman, she had provided herself with a suit for the time's exigency. Thick woolen was it, ending in knickerbockers and stout shoes. There was a skirt which, by unclasping its belt, could be taken on or off in an instant. She proved sturdy and there is no occasion for the telling of the fishing and hunting records of the two. They were most content and they lingered in the mountains.

One day—it was late for autumn—in the foothills—Jim Trumbull, one of Felton's two mining friends over on a visit said abruptly:

"Felton, it's time to leave. We're all ready to skip."

"I think so too," said Felton. "Those first little snows seem ominous. I think we'll get it early in the season. I intend to leave to-morrow night. The burros are all ready."

But the next day Felton and his wife found tracks and hunting and a good day of it, and so night found them still in the cabin. At eight o'clock in the evening Felton went out and looked about. There was a great ring around the moon, and the stars had a dim look, not like their usual story. "It looks like the sky over Chicago," Felton muttered. He slept uneasily and was awake at daylight looking anxiously from the cabin door. The earth had changed. The universe was white. The earth was white and the air was white. He leaped back into the cabin. Breakfast over, the man who had forced himself to eat, said:

"Get a day's food, Kate, and get on your hunting dress, with thick garments under it, as quickly as you can."

She did as he told her and he made swiftly a back load of the provisions and her skirt and two great blankets. Well knew he that they must reach Parson's Camp or be lost.

They plunged into the whiteness. They must cross the billowy tongue of high land up and down lying between the two forks of the great canyon. Across this mesa ran a rude trail which none knew better than did Felton, but to feel and keep it with this white shroud of snow upon the ground and in the air was a feat almost impossible. They plunged ahead into the white depths, for the wind had made the snow deep in the opening, and this depth, while it retarded their progress, was after all a godsend. It aided Felton in keeping the trail. What need to tell of the details of that awful day? Darkness was falling when Felton carried an exhausted and senseless woman into Parson's Camp. There was no one there. Felton struck a match and found a

"THEY PLUNGED INTO THE WHITENESS"

half-burned candle. He gave his wife whiskey and water and, later, food, and she was soon herself, for the trouble was but exhaustion. Then Felton sat down upon a chair and figured the thing out aloud.

"They thought we'd gone and so did not pay any attention to us. They had sense enough to skip in time."

His wife was up and beside him now.

"What of it?" she said, "we have shelter and warmth, and when it stops snowing perhaps we can dig out"—seeing his face, she added—"anyway we'll be rescued, somehow." Her husband laughed, agreeingly.

"Of course," he said, "we're all right." Then he began looking around for food.

He found in one corner a bushel of potatoes and hanging beside a bunk of shelves where the cook had kept his dishes, there was a good part of a dried deer's ham. Standing on a chair he peered over the top of the shelves. There was nothing there.

"We shall have to live on dried venison and potatoes," he said. "They seem to have left most of their stuff on top here," and the lady was content.

"We'll have venison in all sorts of ways," she commented. "Here's some salt," and she held up a little bag she had found on the floor.

They supped on what they had brought and slept in the bunk which with its belongings, had been abandoned by one of Felton's friends. There passed a couple of blithesome days—to the woman—while Felton, brave liar, smiled and made fires, and puns and love, and was sick at heart and full of an inflammatory vocabulary in his inmost being. The miners had probably not yet half way floundered through the snow lying between them and a more or less green old valley. Without aid from the outside Felton knew that he and his wife must die.

The snow fell quietly, steadily, remorselessly. When the two should be missed on the arrival of the miners at the settlement, it was more than likely that the mountains would be inaccessible until spring.

Felton found an axe and kept himself from desperation by digging out certain trees in a wind blown clear space one side of the cabin. The small trees he converted into firewood, passing the sticks through the window to Kate, who delightedly piled the fuel up in great stacks by the chimney. It was not very cold, and they congratulated themselves upon their store of wood, which was carefully husbanded, for future contingencies.

On the fourth day it ceased snowing and they could see the world. It was all white. The snow was about five feet on a level around the house. The canyon down which the home trail ran was evenly filled with feathery powdered snow. It grew colder. Felton at last told the truth to Catherine.

"Dear, I have been lying to you frightfully. There has been no food on the top of the big shelf. We have enough to live on for four or five days, at the utmost. Then we must starve. We are supposed by our friends to be safe, and we cannot reach the outside world. It would take weeks for the most determined men to reach us—from Sharon even, the nearest settlement."

Any man should be satisfied with what this woman did then. She said: "Dear, the only reproach I have is that you did not tell me the true situation at first. Then we could have suffered together, and that would have been better. As it is I think I realize all the situation now. We are together and we have been very happy anyhow."

This altogether illogical conclusion of her words somehow strengthened Fenton wonderfully. He began fumbling round the room. Courage filled his heart, without reason, he felt, but with courage regained he was not inclined to quibble as to its source.

"I don't know," he said, "somehow, my girl, you've given me hope. I'll bet the good God will help us."

"Course He will," responded this dignified, blessed young matron born and bred in Boston.

"Come," said Catherine, rousing herself from the thoughtful mood which had gripped her, after the first excitement of Felton's revelation was over. "We haven't half explored this place. Who knows but there's a barrel of flour stowed away in some dark corner."

"Behind this door—for example," said Felton, entering into his wife's mood, and glad for any little diversion to check thought and imagination.

There had been standing against the wall in one dark corner of the room an old door, evidently brought in from some outhouse for the repairing of its hinges. It had not been disturbed since the new occupancy of the place. Felton grasped the pineplanks in both hands and set them to one side. There semi-gleaming in the candlelight hung revealed one of the two business ends of the common place and eminently valuable telephone of North America.

Felton gasped and then sat down backwards on the floor. "Holy smoke," was all he said.

Catherine came running to the half dazed man but for a little time he said nothing. He was thinking. He remembered suddenly that there was a telephone between the mine and the nearest town in the valley, that to which the miners had fled. Of course the line was deep beneath the snow, part of the way, but it might be working. He looked at his wife in a dazed way, clambered to his feet and took hold of the receiver.

"Don't be disappointed," said Catherine, "if it doesn't work. We shall be saved somehow."

"Hello!" shouted Fenton, into the familiar, waiting 'phone.

The dazed wife stood by in the silence which ensued, saying nothing.

Moment after moment passed and there came no answer. Still the man stood there repeating at intervals of four or five minutes the hopeless word, the call "Hello". Suddenly he upreared himself, laughed somewhat wildly, and applied his lips to the transmitter.

"Hello! Who is this?" came the query from Sharon.

"I am Robert Felton. Tell Jim Worthy or George Long that we are snowed in at Parsons, without provisions for more than a few days, and tell them to come in a hurry—the trail is from five to twenty feet deep in snow."

"Who do you mean by we—all of the Parson's crowd?"

Then another question was put.

"My wife is with me—we are alone—the Parson's outfit left the night the storm began."

"All right. Keep a stiff upper lip. There'll be help coming," called the operator, and the bell rung ending the conversation.

Felton could not speak. He sat dumbly waiting, while Catherine chattered to him of commonplace things to win him back to his ordinary frame of mind.

Soon the telephone bell rang again, and this time friendly, well known voices gave messages of hope and good cheer. It was rumored that the men from Parson's camp were on the way—but so far they had not arrived. Men and horses amply supplied with tools, with provisions, with everything needful, would leave the valley at once for the work of rescue.

"But how long can you hold out?" at last broke in one of the heartsome, friendly voices."

"It may take us ten or even twenty days to shovel through to you—can you stand such a siege?"

"We'll do our best," returned Felton, over the wire, "but the truth is, we are pretty short of food, so take no chances."

They were already living on carefully measured out rations and Felton resolved to reduce his own portion below the meagre amount he had already given himself.

"Keep up heart, we'll help you—Goodbye!" So ended this talk with Worthy and Long.

The days dragged. The wood chopping, the fire keeping, the story telling, to beguile the weary hours, went on. Once or twice a day came a message of good hope from Sharon. The rescuers were off, and in the shortest time possible would reach the beleagured couple.

One morning there came a sharp, insistent ringing of the bell which opened the door of the world to these two who were making their one daily meal from scraps of dried meat, and almost the very last of the treasured rations were in their hands at the moment.

"Hello!" called Felton at the 'phone in a moment.

"Hello! That you Felton?"

"Yes. This isn't Tom, is it?"

"Yes—of course, Tom, just in from Parson's—been hearing about you. We left in a hurry—mighty lucky or you wouldn't have had the telephone connected and ready for business."

It was one of the men from Parson's camp.

"They've reached Sharon!" said Felton to Catherine.

"Say!" came Tom's voice over the wire, "You've found the stores, haven't you?"

"What stores?" replied Felton—"We found a little dried venison, and some potatoes in the cupboard, but they are all gone."

"Darn a tenderfoot anyway!" shouted Tom—then recollecting himself he went on. "Take up a board there over by the table. Where do you expect to find provisions if not in the cellar?" Then he muttered to himself. "They're in luck. It's just a providence! We thought of packing that grub down with us."

Down went the hand of Felton, and away he sprung to the square pine table near the door.

Taking up a loose board he gazed exantantly into what Tom called the cellar, a square hole under the floor, filled with boxes and kegs and tin cans of meat and vegetables and biscuits.

"Catherine!" he called, but Catherine was already there, kneeling by him, her arms around his neck. She was crying, the brave girl, and Felton was conscious of a sneaking desire to follow her example.

"But won't we feast?" at last Catherine spoke. And then she ran to the telephone to send her own special message to Tom, and to the whole Parsons outfit, and it is certain that there never went over the wires a more grateful and gracious thankfulness than was expressed by Catherine and Felton upon this occasion.

And so, with renewed life, the two awaited events, and one day, toward noon, they heard through the stillness a faint sound, a sort of metallic clink, and a little later they were sure of the welcome ring of men's voices. Felton fired off the loaded rifle which hung over the cabin door at Parson's and soon came an answering volley of pistol shots and a faintly heard muffled "hurrah."

Felton seized his own snow shovel, and began madly working through the drifts in front of the door. His efforts looked puny in the waste of snow, but it was a relief to his nerves to be active, and soon Catherine joined him, laughing and royally flourishing the Parsons broom.

It was two hours before the rescuing army of miners and cowboys reached the little lane which Felton and Catherine had cut out and swept for them—scarce ten yards it reached from the doorway. And then, well, then it was but a few days back to the world—that world which had been saved to Felton and his wife by the life line, the wire stretched across and through the snow between mountains and men.

CHAPTER VII

A TOAD AND A SONG

There had been a period of aimless talk in the rear car after the Miner had concluded, but this resolved itself finally into a lively discussion regarding the probable quality of the hidden country round about. Some declared that there existed only the abomination of desolation while others spoke of the amazing wealth concealed beneath the surface of the earth and asserted that neither the Land of Ophir nor Pennsylvania could endure comparison with the region in which they were now marooned.

"Is this place in the midst of the ore-producing or the coal region?" some one asked, "or is it in neither? How about it, Mr. Miner?"

"I don't know," responded the Miner, "I only know that if it's coal, it's better than metal. When you find coal, you've got something. When you find silver or gold, you don't know how hard it may be to extract it from its rock or how soon the find will peter out. Even bonanzas peter out. When you find gold or silver, you're just flirtin'. When you strike a coal bed you've got married."

There was a laugh at the Miner's simile and then a reflection from another seeker after information, Mrs. Livingston this time.

"I wonder which is the older, the ore or the coal? It would be interesting to know."

"I imagine, madam," said the Professor, as he was only known, "that the ore deposits, formed by volcanic upheavals, far antedate those of coal, originating from vegetable deposits, great forests, fern-like forests it may be, which had their being long after earth had become productive. Besides, as I understand, a toad has been taken from a coal mine and the toad, thus discovered, belongs to a modern order of batrachians."

"Was the toad alive?" was asked.

"So I understand," said the Professor. "It was in a comatose condition but revived when brought into the air and light."

There was much comment among the party and then an idea came suddenly to the Young Lady, who was by no means lacking in sentiment or fancy. "I wonder," she mused, "what that toad was thinking of during all the centuries of his dark imprisonment? Mr. Poet," she broke out, "You are to retire to the end of the car and, for one hour, at least, no word may you utter. I will find you paper and pencil now, and you may not speak again until you have written a poem telling of the sensations of that toad when he was restored to light and air again."

The Poet was gallant. "One cannot do well always under duress," was his response, "but one should certainly make an effort, under the circumstances. I'll do my best, at least."

And so, amid the laughter of the passengers, he was hustled off to a corner and left to his fancies and his struggle. The conversation went on and the sufferer in the corner was almost forgotten save, of course, by the Young Lady. It was a little after the hour's end, when he emerged, exhibiting a rather graceful diffidence. And this is what he read:

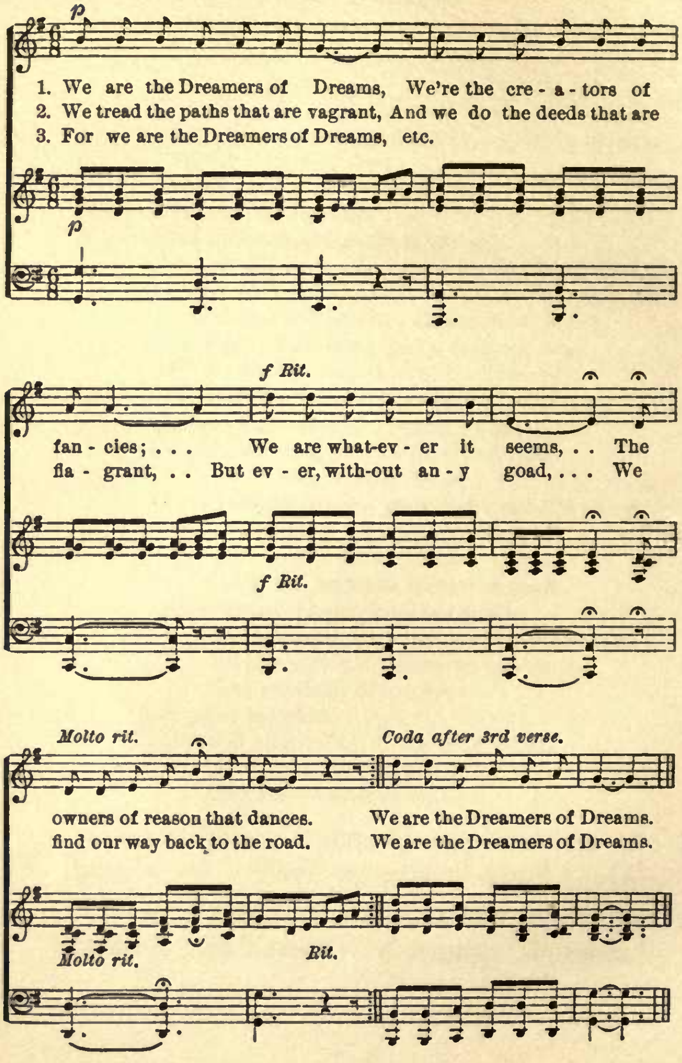
THE TOAD FROM THE MINES

I am a toad,
Squat and grimy and rough and brown,
I come from a queer abode,
From down, down, down,
Where, for centuries, no light
Had fallen on my sight,
Until, with sudden shock,
Parted the rock,
Yielded the stony clamps

And blazed in my dim eyes the miners' lamps!
What view is now unfurled!
It is another world
From that I left
Centuries ago, to which they've brought me
Since the black rock was cleft
Where thus they caught me.
Centuries ago, one day,
I was upon a river bank, at play.
Nature was very fair;
I fed on buzzing insects of the air,
Beneath tall palms that grew beside the stream
In which huge monsters bathed. It did not seem
A world like this at all. It was more grand.
The mighty waters washed a teeming land
And life was great and fervid. Suddenly
Upheaved the land, upheaved the awful sea;
The earth was riven; toppling forests bent,
To sink and disappear in that vast rent!
Down, down, down.
The landscape plunged from light and life away;
And now again, to me alone, 'tis day.
How odd it all appears!
Encysted in the rock ten thousand years,
I am a stranger here; I cannot praise
Those who released me; mine are not your ways.
In this new life I have no enterprise;
The sunshine in my eyes
But gives me pain.
Put me in some niche of the rock again,
It is the only fit abode
For me—a prehistoric toad.

There was a buzz of applause as the Poet concluded. Then up rose Colonel Livingston.

"The Toad's experience has made me sentimental and dreamy of mood. Personally, I'd


p
1. We are the Dreamers of Dreams, We're the cre - a - tors of
2. We tread the paths that are vagrant, And we do the deeds that are
3. For we are the Dreamers of Dreams, etc.
p
f Rit.
fan - cies; . . . We are what-ev - er it seems, . . The
fla - grant, . . But ev - er, with-out an - y goad, . . . We
f Rit.
Molto rit.
Coda after 3rd verse.
owners of reason that dances. We are the Dreamers of Dreams.
find our way back to the road. We are the Dreamers of Dreams.
Molto rit.
Rit.

like to have my savage breast soothed by some music. Has anybody a piano? No? Well, we can get along without one. Will not some one sing? Who can sing? Mr. Stranger," —and he addressed himself to a recent and as yet unrecognized addition to the party—"you seem to enter into the spirit of the occasion and to enjoy our fancies indulged here in this, our preposterously direful strait. Will you sing for us?"

And to the amazement of all, the Stranger did not hesitate a moment. "Certainly," said he. "I believe in fancies." And this is what he sang:

THE DREAMERS OF DREAMS

We are the Dreamers of Dreams;
  We are the creatures of fancies;
We are—whatever it seems,—
  The owners of reason that dances,
We are the Dreamers of Dreams.

We tread in the paths that are vagrant,
  And we do the deeds that are flagrant;
But ever without any goad,
  We find our way back to the road.

For we are the Dreamers of Dreams;
  We are the creatures of fancies;
We are—whatever it seems,—
  The owners of reason that dances,
We are the Dreamers of Dreams.

CHAPTER VIII

ALAN MACGREGOR'S BROWN LEG

One whose presence aided in promoting a healthful mental atmosphere among those so constrained to be together was a lady perhaps thirty years of age who bore herself with the air of a school-teacher, but decidedly with the manner of one whom her pupils would more love than fear. She laughingly alluded to herself as the Teacher and, by common consent, this had become her designation. It was she, most well-informed and reflective of ladies, who, after the applause following the Stranger's song had barely died away, advanced a proposition involving immediately and deeply a tanned, good-looking man who, as was known, had been engaged in the work of collecting rare orchids in South America.

"I have read somewhere," said she, "that people adrift for days at sea, and parched and half-crazed with thirst, either relieve or, possibly, aggravate their sufferings—I do not know how that may be—by all sorts of queer debate as to whether ice-water is good for the health or not, whether iced-claret is better than plain lemonade, in short in a discussion as to the relative merits of all sorts of cooling drinks. And I have read too, that people starving, like some of the Arctic explorers, conduct themselves in almost the same way, imagining all sorts of magnificent repasts, each telling of some meal where his choice among foods was the principal dish or describing what he would first order should he ever reach civilization again.

"Now," she continued, "it seems to me," and she drew her cloak about her more closely and with a shudder, "it seems to me that it would be a great relief and comfort if some one were to tell a story of a tropic region, a place where snow and ice are all unknown. I think we would enjoy it. I know I should myself. Mr. Explorer," and she turned to that gentleman, "you have certainly at some time wandered about in the vicinity of the Equator, cannot you tell us a story, the scene of which is laid in a region where it is always decently warm?" And she shuddered again and cuddled down more closely in her seat.

The Explorer answered readily: "I've been in the vicinity of the Equator a great many times, but I do not remember any experience which would furnish material for a story." He hesitated a moment, "Ah, yes, I do, it's a very curious story, too. I think we may call it

"ALAN MAC GREGOR'S BROWN LEG"

Alan Mac Gregor was with us in South America. He was with us, but not of us. He had money enough, and had come along just because I wanted him to, and he wanted to see what the tropics were like. We were a semi-scientific group, looking for orchids and caoutchouc and various other things which could be transported down the Amazon and turned into good dollars at any port on the Atlantic coast.

MacGregor was practically an outsider, but was generally regarded as one of us. I think the only possible distinction which existed between him and any other man of the group was, that he was desperately in love with a young Scottish woman of Chicago, of whose intense clannishness and patriotism he was everlastingly boasting and laughing the while. In fact, he became almost something of a bore to us, with his dreaming and his tale-telling of this Miss Agnes Cameron, who, he declared was the most earnest Highlander on the face of the earth. She knew every clan and the coloring of any crisscross of tartan ever worn under snowflake or under sunshine. He was most desperately in love, and what he seemed greatly to admire in his sweetheart was her pure Scottish patriotism. She thought of, and he quoted, only "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," or "Up with the bonnets of Bonny Dundee," or any other thing of that sort relating to the exploits of the Highlanders of modernly classic times.

Well, MacGregor and I did a good deal of exploring and a good deal of shooting, and enjoyed ourselves together. It is not necessary in this account to mention the exact locality, because, to tell the truth, I could not remember it distinctly myself. We were camped in the corner of a little affluent of the Amazon, some hundreds of miles up from the delta. It was a pleasant enough region, barring the fact that it was frightfully hot and that there seemed to be more jaguars and alligators and anacondas to the square mile than were really necessary. Of course, tastes differ as to the number of jaguars and alligators and anacondas there should be to this mentioned area, but the consensus of opinion in our little party was that, in that latitude and altitude, the average had been a little overrun. Not only were they numerous—the animals thus indicated—but they seemed to be, in every instance, healthy and unnecessarily enterprising.

Lots of things happened, but the thing which has always remained best fixed in my memory was the affair of MacGregor's brown leg. We had been out shooting parrots together that very afternoon, and I remember that he drove me nearly mad by his repetition of how good a Scotchwoman his "lassie" was, and how she boasted of the fact that she was a direct descendant of the reckless old riever, who, herding back into the Highlands stolen cattle from the Lowlands, and stopping for a few hours about midnight to let kine and clansmen rest, suddenly discovered that his son, his eldest son, the pride of clan and family, had so degenerated that, lying barelegged in the snow, he had rolled up a snowball for a pillow, and was there sleeping most luxuriously when his father found him. The old laird promptly kicked that snowball into the ewigkeit, and wanted to know how far his family had become degenerate and degraded! Well, Miss Agnes Cameron boasted of this old laird as her great, great, and so on, ancestor. This will give some idea of the extent of her native pride in bare legs and Scottish blood.

It was, perhaps, four o'clock one afternoon when we were in camp in an open glade in the very midst of the forest, that the whole company scattered itself of its own impulse. I wanted to study the habits of a small animal, a specimen of which I had seen among some rocks a mile away—a sort of little armadillo. My scientific associate wanted to try for a jaguar, the growls of which our attendants had heard in the forest, a mile or so in the other direction. The natives whom we had employed as guides and servants were themselves anxious to engage in a little expedition of their own. They had seen a fruit of which they are fond—they are always gorging when they have opportunity, these almost savage natives—and they wanted to go out and gather a great quantity of it while the opportunity offered. Alan alone remained inactive. He had worked hard the day before, had done a lot of shooting, and had need of rest, and now, as he declared, he wanted to slip away and sleep all the afternoon. Sometimes Alan drank a little. I believe he had a flask with him that day. At any rate, we all departed and left him lying stretched out upon the ground beneath a giant tree, which kept him shaded as if beneath an umbrella, fifty feet, at least, in its diameter.

That is all there was to the situation. We drifted away into the forest in our several directions, and left Alan lying there sleeping like a lump, for, poor fellow, he needed rest. "It would take a good deal to disturb that man," laughed one of the party as we departed. Now, as to what followed, I can tell you only of what I did not see, but what, as was made apparent later, was the absolute fact.

We were camped close beside a great creek which reached the affluent of the Amazon, and along these creeks, as along the river proper, were gigantic serpents. The anaconda is as much at home on land as in water. Those big constrictors of the southern part of this great hemisphere are dreadful. They prey upon the deer and upon a thousand other things. They are a terror everywhere, and, though we did not know it at the time, there was concealed in that tree beneath which poor Alan was lying, a very healthy specimen of this powerful reptile. That was what we concluded afterward, although the great snake may not have been

"THE GREAT SNAKE BEGAN ITS WORK OF DEGLUTITION" there when we left, and may have come afterward. Anyway, what happened must have been just this: The great serpent saw the sleeping man, and looked upon him as his prey. He saw what was his food breathing stertorously, and he dropped from the tree or came up from the river beside him. He began to swallow the man.

It was unfortunate for this particular anaconda that the reptilia are not great reasoners. He should have begun upon the man's head. Then it would have been a simple thing. The man would have been engulfed, the serpent would have crawled sluggishly a hundred yards or so away and begun his period of digestion, and that would have been the end of the incident. Instead of that, he started on a foot, and began swallowing from that point. Now, it is a well-known fact that this swallowing of a body by any of the constrictor family, except as to contraction and eventual suffocation, is harmless, because the jaws of this class of serpents are unconnected. The upper jaw slips forward, hooks onto the body with its fangs and draws it into an enormously distended throat. Then the under jaw slips forward in the same manner, hooks its fangs, and draws it back in the same way. So, inch by inch, a body is engulfed. Anything with a nonsensitive exterior can be swallowed by an anaconda, a boa, or a python without knowing about it until a lack of air becomes apparent.

MacGregor wore a pair of very heavy leather trousers he had secured to guard him against the undergrowth with which we had to worry. So the great snake began his work of deglutition, and Alan lay there, unconscious of what was going on. Still that snake swallowed Alan as fast as he could. He swallowed him as far up as the leg went and then stopped, from the simple fact that the rest of Alan lay at right angles across his mouth, and he could not swallow any further. But a snake does not reason much, and this particular anaconda lay there contented, perhaps in his dim way knowing that he had got something good as far as it went, and that he was satisfied. And the process of digestion went on.

It was truly a coincidence that we all returned almost together that evening. It must have been about seven o'clock. Malcolm came back from his particular quest without a jaguar. I had failed to find my little animal. The natives had found their fruit, and had gathered a large load, or they would have been in long before us.

Then we looked for Alan. To describe the scene that ensued when our poor friend was discovered would be impossible. He was sleeping like a log. We thought him dead, at first, but some one gave him a spat upon the face and shouted, and he leaped, or tried to leap, to his feet, and when he saw what was the matter, he gave one of the most blood-curdling yells ever emitted upon either the North or the South American continent. The snake began thrashing around, but was already in a semi-lethargic condition, and was promptly chopped in two a little below the point where the foot of our poor friend was supposed to be. Then the remainder of the serpent was cut away with much difficulty from the leg which it had enveloped, and a shocking spectacle was presented.

It is understood, generally, that the digestive organs of the anaconda are something most remarkable. Here was an illustration in fact. Not only the leather trousers of our unfortunate friend had been digested away, but the digesting process had reached his skin and destroyed it utterly. The bare flesh was all exposed and the skin had followed the trousers. Alan was unable to stand, and was so overcome with horror at his condition, as to be incapable of suggesting anything for relief from his immediate predicament or for his future restoration. The raw flesh attracted a myriad of insects, who added all their tantalizing possibilities to the situation. Alan could not bear contact with any sort of covering, and none of us was provided with oiled silk or anything suitable for such an unheard-of emergency. I did not know what to do. I called upon Dr. Jacobson, the eminent scientist of the expedition. Hardly had I asked his advice, before there came the whirr and swish of arrows, and we were in a charming fight in no time. The event, in fact, became almost too interesting, but we managed to drive off the natives and found half a dozen of them, dead or dying in the underbrush. They had carried off most of their wounded.

To Jacobson came an inspiration, as he was looking curiously at one of the dead natives. He broke out excitedly:

"There's an insensible, dying Indian just about the size of MacGregor. If we work quickly enough, we can do the biggest job of skin grafting ever heard of upon this or any other continent, or anywhere in stellar space as far as you have a mind to go."

We did it all with a rush, under the scientist's direction. We skinned that half-way nigger's leg, and it was immediately and neatly inflected, adjusted, and stitched upon the leg which had loitered a shade too long in the maw of the anaconda. The dark skin fitted on, and grew to be a part of MacGregor in almost no time. Talk about the "hand-me-down" man who assures the customer that the thing "fits shust like de paper on de vall," well, neither he nor his customer could be counted in with our scientist and MacGregor and a portion of tha South American, so lately but so permanently deceased.

That is about all there is to the tropical part of this episode. I was present when Alan met his sweetheart again. Soon came St. Andrew's day. MacGregor was to be a prominent figure, and his sweetheart awaited the occasion with pride and hopefulness, and great enthusiasm. She waited, anxiously, until she should see her true love conspicuous, as she thought he ought to be, in the crack organization of those who made part of the parade of St. Andrew's day. There came a moment of intense excitement, both to her and to the somewhat overbearing Scottish group about her. When it was generally understood that the most vaunting, aristocratic, and full-blooded Scots company was about to pass, she watched and watched, watched just for him, to see her great lover stalking nobly in the finest company. Time lagged. Never before had Time so loafed and enjoyed himself in some nonsense by the way side. Finally, a hundred yards away, came imposing and demanding on the ear-drums the music of the pipes. There wasn't any slogan, because there wasn't any fight, but something almost as appealing to the clean, stubborn, Scottish heart, be it in man or woman. They swung around the corner and into the main street. She saw it all and she knew it all, and looked for Alan MacGregor among those coming barelegged to the fore with the weird music which has for centuries meant ever pluck, and sometimes conquest. Her eyes turned this way and that way, and finally they lit upon her sweetheart. There was no doubt about it. There he was, marching as lieutenant or something of that sort, of the tartaned company, all barelegged from below the kilt a little above the knee to thick stocking just below the knee, all alike displaying this ancient Scottish endurance of field and flood and of anything else. The girl's stately Alan walked grandly in his place, clad confidently in the tartan of his clan, and showing his strip of leg about the knee as brazenly as did any other man of the parading Scotsmen.

The girl saw him, looked upon him, first buoyant, excited and admiring, then appalled. She saw him lording it abroad among his minions, and, at the same time, she noted that his legs were black and those of the other men white. She could not understand it; it was something ghastly.

What had happened was this:

It was the morning of St. Andrew's day, and they were gathered in the armory, the hundreds of enthusiastic Scots. The sun's rays shot slanting through the windows, lit upon bonnet, tartan, and sporan, and upon legs bare at the knee, "uncomely fair," as a veteran observed, which was not to be wondered at, as they were thus exposed but once a year, to the intense but concealed discomfort of their shivering but patriotic owners. Ringing-voiced and cheerful among them was Alan MacGregor. He dressed himself in the retiring room, as did the others, and came out in all the kilted glory of his ancient clan. He was a fine figure of a man to look upon, but there was a howl when he appeared. The bare patch about the knee of one leg showed white, and on the other, black!

"Ken ye what's the matter wi' your legs, mon?" roared a giant among the group; and MacGregor looked down, to realize in a moment his condition. It would never do to march through the streets with one leg black and the other white. In desperation he told his story to his assembled countrymen. There was a groan of sympathy and perplexity, until the tension was relieved by the cry of an inventive young whelp from the Orkneys:

"What's the matter with ink?"

The suggestion was received with a howl of applause, and, three minutes later, the bare portion of MacGregor's white leg was made to correspond in color with the other.

To repeat, in a way, what has been already told, from the armory, the gallant Scotsmen swung upon the street in serried numbers, to march imposingly through streets lined and flanked with thousands and thousands of their fellow-citizens of any birth. They made a spectacle which it was good to see. Each piper "screwed his pipes and garred them skirl," "The pibroch lent its maddening tone," and the pipes droned and clamored and yelped for victory nearer and nearer all the time. The marchers passed in gallant style. The moment came at last when, with a defiant howl of the pipes, MacGregor's company passed the stand, and it was now that, as has been related, Agnes saw her lover, broad shouldered, cleanly built, and striding with the inherited gait of a thousand chieftains. Eh! but he was fine! For one blissful moment Agnes gazed upon her lover's figure, before she saw his knees. She swooned, and the lady who sat next her applied her salts and led her gently from the scene.

It seemed to the Scotchwoman there was but one thing for her to do. When she recovered sufficiently, she wrote this letter to her Alan:

"Oh, Alan! Are ye no patriot, no product of the Scotsmen of the old time? And I, I thought your blood as blue as the water in the mountain lakes fresh tinted from the sky. Oh, Alan! my Alan! ye looked so braw, barrin' the black breeks ye wore to protect the single patch of ye from the raw weather. Oh, Alan! did our stern ancestors do the like of that? Cared they for squall or flurry or the frost rime? Oh, my Alan! I love ye. Ye ken it well, but we must not marry. Think ye I would tak pride in children of the man of the black breeks? I'm gey—sore gey! Your "AGNES."

Now note what happened! Now pity me! Alan was heart-riven and wild, and came to me in his distress. I was the only person in the great city who could give authoritatively the story of his brown leg. I was the only person who could re-establish him in Agnes' mind as an ardent Scot. Imagine a mission like that. Imagine a man having to go and talk to a young lady about one of her lover's legs! I don't know how I did it, but certainly I did it. I want to say here and now and frankly—and I don't care whether she reads it or not—that when I first met her, the temperature was far more sultry than we had ever found it upon the Amazon. It dropped many degrees, though, before my story was concluded.

Well, they have a boy about two years old, and they have named him after me. I don't know what I'll do to that boy. The little wretch hugs me so strenuously that I believe he is part anaconda.

And this ended the story-telling for the day. Their imaginations had been "stretched enough" commented kindly Mrs. Livingston.

CHAPTER IX

THE HUGE HOUND'S MOOD

The morning of the third day of rude experience opened somewhat more brightly for "the wastrels of the waste," as the Young Lady of the party very nicely designated them, for it had cleared. There remained, however, the thought that the addition to the snowfall must delay the work of rescue, an apprehension which was soon confirmed. Stafford was using the telegraph with no inconvenience now. He had contrived to bring a wire from the main line into the smoking car, and communication from there with those on the relief train was an easy matter. The news that came was not exhilarating. Very slow headway was being made, so the workers beyond the drifts reported. The railroad company had not yet installed the rotary snow-plows which, later, proved most effective, hurling the snow to a distance and clearing the way thoroughly, while the one in use but bored its way through the drifts, only to have a part of the tossed-up mass come whelming back to the track again. There was a vast amount of shovelling to do, and that took time. The resolute workers "at the other end of the trouble," as the train-men called it, were not discouraged, but they admitted that they were not attending a midsummer picnic. In fact there was no semblance of a picnic about it. They were not so assured now that release would come to the enthralled on the fourth day, at the latest. They but expressed a glittering confidence that the fifth day, beyond all doubt, would see the end. This assurance by no means satisfied the captive passengers. They felt that the White Jailor still held the keys and had them in his inside pocket.

There was much gossip over the emergency line and, despite the somewhat oppressive news, there was infused an element of cheerfulness by this easy, sympathetic communication with the outside world. The car in which the instrument was placed was a magnet, for, though Stafford was the only one on the train possessing sufficient experience to accomplish what he had done, there were some who understood a little of the science of telegraphy and could receive and send messages, after a fashion.

Communication between the trains was going on most of the time.

Stafford had completed his work at the instrument and returned to his own car, where the usual group, with others who had wandered in, were assembled, amusing themselves as best they could for the after-luncheon hour. He had noted the outline of a woman's head as he entered, and though her face was not toward him, knew very well to whom the fair head belonged. A sudden courageous impulse swayed him to its way, an impulse for which he had reason to be grateful all his life. He advanced and seated himself directly across the aisle from the Far Away Lady, who looked at him and smiled a quiet welcome He was not quite himself as he began talking to her, but he did well, under the circumstances, and so did she. It was a meeting as delicious as constrained, for this was the first occasion on which they had opportunity to engage in anything like a real conversation. Hesitant, happy but, in a vague way, apprehensive, with a trying past recalled by tones as familiar to each as if five years were but an hour, the two exchanged only commonplaces at first, comment on the curious manner in which they were now held from the rest of humanity, or speculation over the immediate prospect. It was all commonplace, or would have been so, if either been able to veil the story of the eyes. Eyes are faithful but sometimes faithless servitors, meaning well and doing ill. None can control them absolutely, lovers least of all.

And then their misgivingly sweet communion was ended by what was so inconcieveably and suddenly alarming and dangerous that even Stafford was, for a moment, dazed.

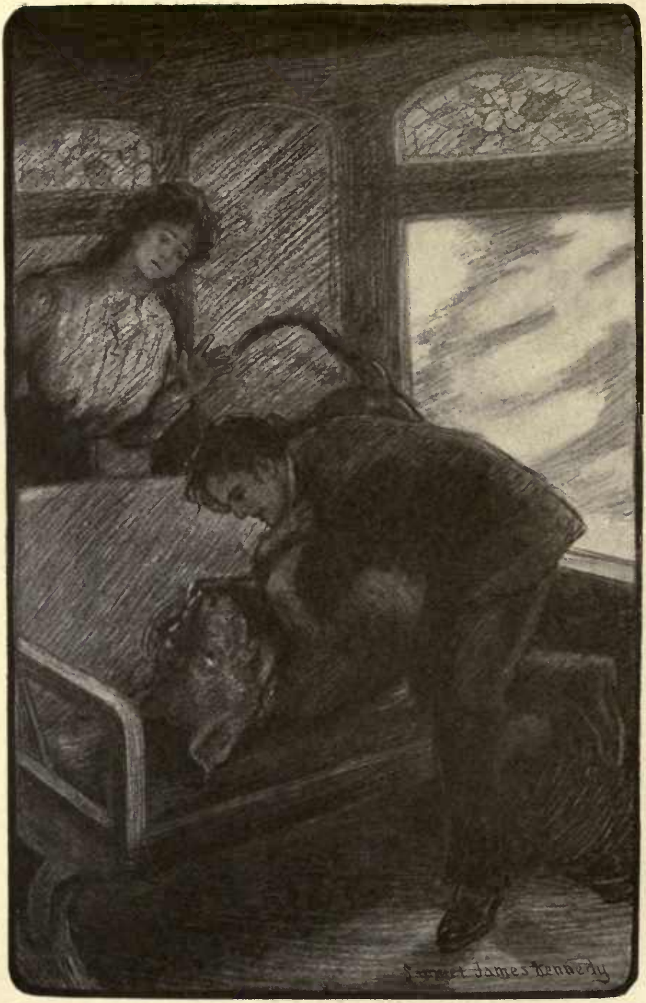
From outside came the sound of a wild yell followed by what was a man's shout, or rather shriek, of terror, then, commingled with a fierce yelp and growl, a sound of clattering on the car steps a rattling of the door, its sudden violent opening, as a man's form veered away from it and plunged into the snow on the other side, and then the appearance of a Thing which hesitated but a second, then turned and entered the car leapingly, a monstrous brute with fanged jaws agape and glaring eyes and death in his fierce intent. Not the Black Dog of the Marshes, not Red Wull, the murderer of Scottish sheep, not the Hound of the Baskervilles could have presented an appearance more utterly demoniacal.

There were cries and shouts of alarm and the occupants of the car were on their feet as the great brute plunged forward. He saw, apparently, but one object. The Far Away Lady had been sitting close to the outside of her seat and it was her white, startled face which drew the red eyes of the charging monster. Two great leaps he made and the third was at her throat.

But not so swift the leap as that of the man opposite the imperiled woman. As a panther starts, Stafford shot from his place and was before her. With arm upraised, to shield his throat, he met the full impact of the tremendous force, staggering before it, but not falling. Then began a struggle brief but terrifying.

The hound's teeth found nothing as they came together, missing the fending left arm as the man thrust it forward, and coming together viciously as the brute fell back for an instant and leaped again. This time the arm was siezed fiercely as the man's right hand grasped firmly the dog's throat. There was a momentary wrenching and swaying, the dog's hold on the arm was lost and, at the same instant, almost, the hand of the arm released was aiding its fellow in the throat grip, when the fierce wrestle became more even. The dog writhed and twisted madly while the man stood, pale but firm, his legs braced against the seats as he sought a mastery of the folding skin and to bring his hands together until they should find the windpipe and afford a chance of throttling his powerful adversary. The feat was not an easy one, for there were great size and the strength of savage rage to overcome. Growling hoarsely, foaming at the mouth, whining hungrily in its blood-thirst, the brute surged forward again and again, and wrenched and swayed in the effort to free himself from that merciless, seeking hold. So they swung and tottered for a moment, and then, at last, the man found the deadly grip he had been feeling for; he had the windpipe of the beast!

Now came another aspect to the struggle. The hound, in peril now, no longer aggressive, for the moment, was fighting for his life. His strength was going. With a mighty effort, Stafford swung him about and backward against the seat, gasping and gurgling. With the utmost strength of his hands the man squeezed and bore forward, at the same time, with all the weight and impulse of his body. The dog



"THE BIG BODY RELAXED AND STRAIGHTENED OUT" twisted in frightful paroxysms, the red tongue protruded and the eyes stared blindly, but there was too much vitality in the animal for a sudden end of all. Still the man surged forward with all his might, bearing so closely that the hot slaver of the beast was on his cheek and in his hair. The straining lasted for a little time, and then at last came what was certain; there was a sudden yielding, a great final gasp, the big body relaxed and straightened out and the fight was over. Stafford rose weakly upright, assisted by the men who had vainly sought opportunity to assist him in the sudden fight and turned toward the woman who lay faint and white, against the window ledge, with face upturned and eyes unseeing. They carried her gently to her stateroom.

There was a rush of the passengers to Stafford's side and there were showering thanks and congratulations and all the exclamatory comment which would naturally follow a scene so startling and with such a termination, but one man swept the others aside, with suddenly acquired authority, and demanded an examination of Stafford's hurt. It was the physician of the group, and the wisdom of his action was recognized at once. It was found that the dog's teeth had entered the fore-arm deeply, but the marks were clean and the blood was flowing readily. "It would be nothing serious," commented the doctor, "if it were not for the chance of hydrophobia. Do you think the dog was mad?" he asked of Stafford.

And, even as he spoke, something happened, something which, as before, was so unexpected, so alarming, so utterly beyond all ordinary chance, as to rob the men there of the moment's reason. There was a snarl like that of a tiger at their very feet and the dog's neck upreared among them fiercely. He had not been strangled utterly unto death, and had revived to breath and life again. His strength seemed to return to him instantaneously. With a growl which was almost a roar, the beast surged into the aisle, his glaring eyes unseeing at first but, as perception came to them, discerning again but a single object. Their devouring intent was upon a figure just entering the other doorway. The animal's sighted quarry was the effervescent youth who had first made himself generally known on the train because of his air of optimism. He had instant opportunity for an exhibition of all his blithesome qualities.

Straight toward the man the dog plunged furiously, in an uplifting leap which was but a hurling of himself squarely at his throat as he had leaped at that thinner one of the Far Away Lady, but the youth lacked not presence of mind, which was illustrated in so diminutive a fraction of a second as to be practically unrecordable. Far and well he sprang from the steps of the car and landed in a drift up to his armpits, falling forward as the dog plunged after him. The beast collided with the railing of the platform and turned and rolled into the snow as he struck the earth, or as nearly the earth as he could go. The snow was above his head, and well it was for the pursued that it was the case. The man plunged ahead, hampered, it is true, but making swift headway in his alarm, straight toward à tree on the ascending slope, a stunted pine which was providentially but a few yards away, while the brute pursuing him plunged wildly about yelping and barking, guided only by scent and sound in his fierce chase. The man had the advantage and what had seemed a prospective tragedy one moment became something very like a comedy the next. It was droll but well was it for the evading man that the snow he had lately been anathematizing had now become his ally and protector. He reached the tree not much ahead of the raving dog, who was at its trunk in a moment as soon as the pursued came fairly into sight, and clambering to safety upon a lower limb, not very far up but sufficiently high to assure him immunity from the snapping jaws of the beast leaping upward in a vain attempt to reach the perching chase. The youth wound his arms about the bole and dangled his legs down tantalizingly, meanwhile announcing exuberantly to the people who had rushed to the platform that snow was the finest thing in the world, when it was deep enough. All would have been over with in a moment and the youth free to come down from his eyrie but for a sudden interruption, for half a dozen of the passengers had, by this time, secured revolvers from their grips and were about to end at once the career of the raging animal. A shot, which missed had already been fired when the voice of Stafford rang out sharply:

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot the brute, yet! I want to know first whether or not he is a mad dog. Wait a few moments."

His request was obeyed unhesitatingly, all recognizing its good sense and forethought, while the Gallus Youth called out cheerily: "That's right. I'll amuse him here Mr. Stafford while you diagnose his ailment. It's a good idea. May save a record case of hydrophobia. Try him on, but look out, or 'dar's gwine ter be not only trubble in de chu'ch but discawd in de choir.' "

And while the passengers crowded at the windows and on the platforms, Stafford did "try him on " He sent for bread and meat and, stepping down to the lower step of the car, waited until the dog had become silent for a moment and was gazing intently and watchfully upward at his undestined prey, and then called out, attracting his attention. There was a general shrinking back, the majority of the passengers expecting a rush of the animal toward the car again, but to the surprise of all he did not move as Stafford spoke to him soothingly, though he turned his head and showed his teeth. Stafford leaned forward and tossed to the dog's very feet the steaming meat and other food which had been brought and no sooner had the scent reached the nostrils of the beast than, ignoring instantly the man perched in the tree he pounced upon the food voraciously, gulping it down as if he had not fed for months. Stafford called for more and fed the suffering creature until he would eat no longer. Then he called the dog to him, good-naturedly and in an ordinary tone, and, astounding as it was to all, the beast responded, approaching him though somewhat cautiously. Stafford sent for water, and finally the dog lapped it from a pail in quantities which told a story. Dumb animal though it was upon which they were gazing the onlookers could not but sympathize with its evident past distress and recognize what had been the natural consequence. Stafford rose and drew a long breath of relief. Assuredly he had good reason. The chance of hydrophobia was past. "The dog is not mad," he said. "He was only starving and crazed with thirst and raging blindly at everything and anybody. I don't blame the unreasoning beast. How did it happen?"

The whole thing was soon made clear. The dog, a dappled monster Ulm, or Siberian bloodhound, had been shipped from San Francisco to the East by an owner to whom the hound was as the apple of his eye. It had been confined in the forward baggage car the man in charge of which had been ill during the train's imprisonment and had forgotten the beast entirely. The car had not been opened before and the imprisoned animal crazed by thirst and hunger, had gone practically insane with suffering and, upon the opening of the door, had leaped out furiously, in pursuit of the first object upon which it could vent its fury. One man's neglect had resulted in something very close to tragedy.

Now the dog was fawning at Stafford's feet. He patted it on the head and the beast followed him into the baggage car again where it lay down contentedly. There was no thought of killing it now. As one man said: "We may be all going mad ourselves before we get out of this." But he created no apprehension.

Stafford returned to his car and another examination of his hurt was made. The punctures in his arm were treated by the doctor, to avoid all chances, as he said, and the episode of the dog was ended.

CHAPTER X

THE SIREN

The startling episode of the attack of the dog had not sufficed to distract Colonel Livingston's regard from his manifest duty as guide, philosopher and friend to all the incarcerated wayfarers. He was too old a campaigner for that. After the confusion had ceased and comment on the stirring incident had died away, he looked about in austere contemplation. His eyes rested upon the Conductor and Porter, who were discussing something together at the end of the car. He acted promptly.

"Here," he called out, cheerfully but imperatively, "if you think that this train crew has but one sort of responsibility just now, you are mistaken. Passengers must, under the circumstances, have even more attention than usual. They must be entertained. You must each tell a story. Mr. Conductor, I call upon you first."

The conductor was mightily embarrassed. Evidently story-telling was not his specialty.

Recognizing, however, the fact that there was nothing for him but submission to the inflexible Colonel, he succumbed, red in the face and twisting nervously his short mustache.

"I'm not much at telling anything," he managed to explain, "and don't believe I have any story of my own that would be worth while, but I never hear the whistle cut loose that I don't think of what a man I met in San Francisco told me of what has been going on in one of the big cities, and may be going on yet for all I know. I haven't been East of Denver for a long time—that's the end of my run—and, it seems to me, that, if what he told me is true, I'd have seen something about it in the newspapers. Maybe not, though; they miss lots of things. Anyhow, this is what he told me—and I'll try to tell it just as he did, even using some of his big words, about what has been happening with a kind of big whistle to help sailors which they call,

THE SIREN

Half a mile off shore, an adjunct of the lighthouse, was the Siren, friend of mariners and enemy of all the rest of mankind. When the fog came upon the face of the waters and steamers and sailing vessels, creeping fearfully about in all directions, were in danger of collision, with resultant horrors, and shrieked out their apprehensions in strident whistlings, the Siren responded through the opaque waste with a warning howl, telling each seaman where he was and where was safety and where was death. It was a howl of the pitch and key best adapted for reaching a great distance and served its purpose well, yet it was doleful as a sound from the tomb or the wail of a lost soul with a bass voice. But little cared the fog-fretted captains or their crews or passengers for the lugubriousness of the Siren's call. As long as the notes of the misnamed fog-horn indicated the path to safety they cared nothing for the quality of the note.

In the city which stood beside the shore, the case was different. People recognized the fact that the great water highways must be made safe and that mariners must be protected, but the burden of the Siren was hard to bear. Little attention had been paid to its sound at first but the constant iteration had told upon mind and body as tells the constant falling of a single drop of water upon the head. People were seriously affected. In the foggy season strong men became fretful and impatient and weak women were compelled to seek the country. The whole city was threatened with an attack of nervous debility. All night long, and sometimes late into the forenoon, the fog would hang stubbornly above the harbor, and all night long and far into the daylight, the Siren would groan and groan while the people raved. Sanitariums did a thriving business. Some sort of climax was approaching when Hannibal Perkins appeared from the suburbs upon the scene.

Hannibal Perkins was a young man about twenty-one years of age. He was born "down East" as he explained, and was tall and gaunt, with pleasant blue eyes and a soft voice. He was ambitious and possessed of an inventive genius which he wished to cultivate. He had graduated from the city high school and desired now to spend two or three years in a famous scientific academy, but could not gratify his wish, because of relative poverty. He helped his father in the work of a small truck farm just outside the city, but there was small yearly surplus to aid in the realization of Hannibal's hopes and plans. There was stuff in the youth, though. Regretting but not dismayed, Hannibal worked doggedly, ever planning as to how he might raise honestly the needed money. The little farm lay close beside the shore and at night the youth's thoughts were frequently disturbed, for the Perkin's family got the full benefit of the Siren's groans.

Not only was Hannibal Perkins an inventor, but he had a musical gift as well. He played the violin with skill and feeling, and had studied with an excellent teacher, a friend of the family who had become interested in Hannibal and given him lessons gratis. He possessed an exquisite ear and it is doubtful if in all the city there was a person who suffered more from the Siren's dismal cry than did this robust young man. Night after night he would toss about in his bed and but endure. "Is there no way of stopping it," he thought, "Cannot the same end be attained in some less melancholy and devastating way?" Unable to sleep regularly, at last, in desperation he set his wits to work.

Reading a scientific magazine one day, a single sentence impressed itself upon Hannibal Perkin's memory: "It is a well known fact that a musical sound can be heard distinctly at a greater distance than can an unmusical one." Hannibal pondered much.

One night, either because his nerves chanced to be a little more nearly on edge than usual or because the Siren chanced to be in good working order, the sounds which came from the outer harbor seemed to Hannibal more than ordinarily loud and mournful and appalling. He raged helplessly. "What need of so much noise, and such a noise!" he fumed, but, sobering in temper with reflection, tried to content himself with muttering resignedly: "I suppose it's necessary that the thing should be heard as far away as possible,"—then checked his muttering suddenly. The sentence in the scientific periodical had recurred to him. "It is a well known fact that a musical sound can be heard distinctly at a greater distance than an unmusical one." He rose from his bed and sat silent, with wrinkled brow. Gradually the wrinkles disappeared and a light came into the young man's eyes. He sprang to his feet, giving vent as he did so to the single, all unstudied, expression "B'gosh!" He had learned it when a boy "down East" while working in the fields with the hired man.

For the next two weeks Hannibal Perkins did little labor on the farm. His time was spent from daylight to dark in a small lean-to which served the double purpose of woodshed and workship. Then for another week, he was in town studying the mechanism of the great church organs—instruments with which he was already tolerably familiar—and consulting with organ-builders and other craftsmen. The fourth week was spent in the little shop again.

It was the beginning of one of the foggiest months in the year that Hannibal Perkins, hat in hand, somewhat abashed, but resolute, entered the office of the mayor of the city. He looked curiously upon the man seated at his desk. He saw a person of apparently strong physique, but thin and pale and with glittering eyes, the eyes of a victim of insomnia. The mayor wheeled about in his chair.

"What do you want?" he asked peevishly.

It was not a pleasant reception but, as a matter of fact, the man ordinarily affable was nervous and consequently irritable. Hannibal resolved not to appear abashed.

"It's about the Siren," he said.

"What!" The mayor was all interest now. "What about the Siren?"

"I want to suggest a means for getting rid of the awful sounds which come over the water every night; to get rid of them so that the people of this city can sleep again."

The mayor stared at his visitor for a moment or two and then spoke solemnly:

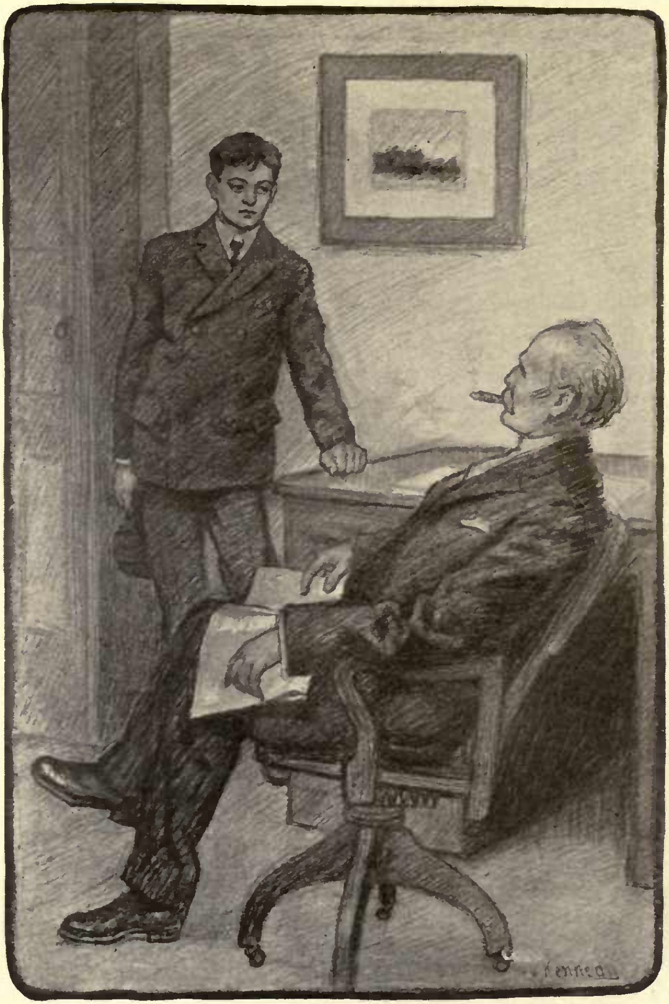
"Young man if you can do what you propose you are not unlikely to take my place in this seat, some day. You will be the most popular man in the city. Look at me! I weighed two hundred and ten pounds when the Siren was first placed in the harbor. Now I weigh a scant one hundred and fifty-six. There are thousands of others who have suffered in the same way—insomnia, shattered nerves and all that sort of thing—and the situation is growing worse instead of better. Only the stolid and dull are unaffected. Talk about American restlessness and excitability! Why, what has been in the past will be calm philosophy compared with what will come in the future when Sirens are established in every harbor of the country. Of course, young man, I know that you're only a dreamer, a would-be inventor—you have the big full eyes of an inventor—but I don't feel like being impatient with any one whose efforts are bent in a direction as laudable as are yours. Tell me what your particular dream is." And the mayor leaned back wearily.

"But I'm not a dreamer!" exclaimed Hannibal excitedly. "I know what I have been doing and what I'm talking about. I tell you I can get rid of the ghastly noise made by the Siren and yet have the vessels warned in a fog as well as they are now. Yes, I'll warn them at even a greater distance. More than that," and Hannibal began to get excited, "more than that, I'll transform what is now a source of agony to one of pleasure. I guarantee it. I can explain my plan to you and you'll say it's feasible, sir; I know you will!" and the young man paused, out of breath.

The mayor's face had taken on a look of patient endurance. "Go ahead," he said, "and show me how the wheels work in your head. I hope it will not take long."

Hannibal paid no attention to the sarcasm. He was too full of his subject: "I tell you, Mr. Mayor, that I've solved the problem. I've spent weeks and weeks upon it and at last I've got it. I can make it as clear as day to you. First I want you to hear this from one of the leading scientific magazines of the world," and he drew forth a clipping and began to read—

"It is a well known fact that a musical sound



"THE MAYOR HAD BEEN GETTING INTERESTED"

can be heard distinctly at a greater distance than can an unmusical one."

"There," continued Hannibal triumphantly, as he restored the clipping to his pocket, "you see the point; you can hear a musical sound at a greater distance than you can hear an unmusical one. The dismal wails of the Siren are not musical, but why not make them so? There's a way and I have found it."

The mayor was sitting erect in his chair, now. He was becoming interested. "Go on," he said.

"Well," replied Hannibal. "There's not much more to say at present. I've given you the general idea. The principle is sound and I know how to put the design into execution."

"Are you sure," said the mayor, "are you very sure?"

"I am," responded Hannibal.

"Well, what do you want?"

"I want the privilege of putting new works inside the Siren, that's all."

"But the Siren is under the control of the United States Government. How can we get permission for the experiment?"

"Oh," said Hannibal, cheerfully, "I've thought all that out. The government usually pays attention to the advice of business men of any locality where it has established something in their interest. The vessel men here are the ones who have influence in the case. Get the vessel men to endorse it and the government will consent to the experiment."

The mayor had been getting more and more interested as all the bearings of the case became clear to him. The thing seemed practicable, and what would not follow should it really prove a success! It would redound to his credit that he had recognized the plan which gave the city peace. He reached a decision promptly.

"I'll help you," he declared, "I'll call a meeting of the vessel men for to-morrow night. You'll have to be there to explain the thing as you have to me—more fully though. Does that suit you?"

Hannibal departed walking on air. Could he convince the vessel men! He had not the slightest doubt of it.

He neither ate nor slept much from the time he left the mayor's office, until on the evening of the next day when he entered the hall where the vessel men were assembled, the mayor with them.

The mayor took the chair, called the meeting to order, explained briefly the proposition which had been made to him, and said that he had thought it best to refer the suppliant to those most vitally interested in the matter. The inventor was present and would make his own explanation.

Hannibal took the platform tremblingly. He had never addressed an audience in his life, and his knees shook and there was a lump in his throat. At first he could not articulate, but when a bluff, red-faced old mariner, taking pity on him, called out—"Don't be scared, young man; take your time," he recovered himself and began stammeringly. Gradually the words came more freely. He believed in his scheme, and that gave him strength. He warmed to his subject and almost forgot where he was. He became eloquent, in an inventor's way. He described the present horrors of the Siren, the condition of the people, and the prejudice that was growing up in consequence against anything marine, a prejudice which might in time affect seriously the shipping interest.

Then he told how much farther a musical sound could travel than could an unmusical one. Then he outlined vaguely the value and nature of his invention which would substitute one sound for the other, and make of the Siren a blessing on land as well as on the water. He carried his audience with him and, when he closed his address, flushed and earnest, his hand was grasped heartily by a large proportion of those present. There was a brief debate, but it was nearly all one way, and it was decided, that the Presidents of the Vessel Owners Association and the Tug Owners Association should form a committee of two, to proceed at once to Washington and there secure from the right department permission for the trying of Hannibal's experiment. Furthermore there was contributed on the spot a sum sufficient, in Hannibal's estimation, for the execution of his plan. Within two weeks the committee had made its trip and returned with the government's consent to the undertaking. Hannibal went to work.

It was no simple task that now faced the young man, albeit the greatest obstacle was just removed. Sanguine as most inventors are, supplied with funds sufficient for his purpose, unlimited as to time, he yet realized a certain gravity to the situation. He rented a wing of an old warehouse, hired capable mechanics as assistants and plunged into his labor, feverishly.

What is known as the "orchestrion" is a gigantic musical machine popular in summer gardens, restaurants and various similar places of public resort. Perforated sheets of metal are slipped into the machine, one after another, and different tunes are played according to the perforations in the metal. The basis of Hannibal Perkin's idea was the orchestrion, with the addition of certain adjuncts of the fog-horn, to secure a volume of sound equaling that which nightly woke the echoes and everything else. Of course he could not himself manufacture perforated plates of the size he required, but a special order to a great firm in the business solved this part of the problem and a huge set of circular plates, twenty-five feet in diameter, was soon delivered at his shop. The machine itself was all the work of Hannibal and his two assistants. The day came when the thing was done and the monster orchestrion, or whatever it might be called, was loaded on a barge and towed to the lighthouse where the siren was about to be deposed. To make the proper attachments for the orchestrion—which did not get its power from winding up in the ordinary way, but by a steam arrangement—was a work of time, for just here was the most difficult part of the undertaking, and where the inventive genius of Hannibal Perkins shone out most brilliantly. It was a new departure but it was all right in principle, as Hannibal had maintained, and the day came when he announced that, when the fog fell that night, a new Siren, one with a voice such as was never heard before on sea or shore, would call across the waters to belated vessel men.

Night came and the fog came with it. Dimmer and dimmer grew the flashes from the lighthouse lantern until, at last, they could no longer be distinguished from the shore, and then, to the people of the great city came a sensation.

> **"Chippie, get your hair cut, hair cut, hair cut,**
> **Chippie, get your hair cut, hair cut short."**

Loud and clear from away out in the harbor came the notes of the rollicking tune, once so generally popular. The atmosphere was fairly saturated with it. Never had even the howl of the detested Siren so thoroughly permeated every outdoor nook and cranny of the town. The moving multitudes on the brilliantly lighted streets paused and listened, and as they stood there, lost and curious, the same sweet but tremendous voice informed them affably:

"There'll be a hot time,
In the old town to-night."

Evidently this spirit of the waters, was of a lively, not to say hilarious, disposition—at least that was the first impression given—but as the hours passed, the music changed in character, and it finally dawned upon the populace that there was method in the madness of the Siren—for the news had flown rapidly of what the wonder was—gentler airs succeeded until the hour when the young men calling should go home, when apparently impersonating all the young women in the city, the Siren spoke softly:

"Bid me good-bye and go!"

and, later, as the time came when erring heads of families might be lingering out too late for their own good, the mentor started in with—

"Oh, Willie, we have missed you!"

and, a little later, after apparent consideration, wailed out despairingly:

"Oh, father, dear father, come home with me now."

It was charming! Still later, came soothing, familiar airs in a minor key, such as were sleep-encouraging, and there was no variation from this until six a.m., when there was an outbreak:

"I can't get 'em up, I can't get 'em up, I can't get 'em up this morning!
The sergeant's worse than the private,
The captain's worse than the sergeant!
The major's worse than the captain,
The colonel's the worst of 'em all!
I can't get 'em up, I can't get 'em up, I can't get 'em up to-day!"

Ringing out over all the city was the reveille, but, as if in drowsy answer came a little later, almost like an echo—the lazy, listless,

"Let me dream again."

Evidently not what was approved of, for, sharply and indignantly, followed the peremptory demand to—

"Take your clothes and go."

And so, until the fog lifted, continued the interesting programme of the Siren. The people were delighted. No more was the name of the "Siren" a misnomer. The newspapers were full of praise of Hannibal Perkins, the inventor, and a dream, for once, was realized. Improvements were made by the elated genius. People in the city soon perceived that certain airs were played only at certain hours, so that one could tell what time of night it was while lying comfortably in bed. The invention was recognized as a boon to the community. The Board of Trade voted a neat lump sum to Hannibal Perkins, he was elected member of numerous scientific and musical societies, and negotiations were begun with the government looking to the introduction of the Siren in harbors everywhere.

Now comes reference to the action of a law of nature which has always been accounted curious, that law which is in direct contradiction of the old and popular saying that one cannot have too much of a good thing. The months passed, months of triumph and elation for Hannibal Perkins, and, at first, of enjoyment for those on land. Then in the city came a gradual change, though Hannibal, in the lighthouse, was not aware of it. There arose an anti-Siren party, and a clamorous one! It was the old story—they were "tired" of the same old tunes. They were all antiquated things it was declared. It was the result of that quality in the human ear and human nerves which enables them to endure the continual passing of a railroad train, but not the too frequent repetition of a musical air. Even an effort to remedy this fault did not avail. There came two dread November weeks of almost continual fog, day and night, and, as the

Siren gave four tunes an hour for variety's sake, it necessarily played ninety-six tunes a day, and there weren't enough popular airs in existence to keep this up without constant duplication, or worse! A new form of nervousness was seizing upon the multitude. Even the mayor, who had grown fat, was getting thin again.

On the other hand the Siren had a powerful supporting force in the officers and crews of every vessel entering the harbor. Most delightful was it to those gallant seamen, when the fog lay dense and sinister, to hear, at a greater distance from land than ever before, the sounds which guided them to safety and, at the same time, to recognize and be cheered by the notes of some familiar air. They heard the Siren only occasionally and to them there was no monotony. The whole shipping interest arose figuratively in arms against those who objected to the new order of things.

And so the case stands now. The government is considering the matter. Doubtless the Perkins Siren will, in the end, be adopted—with modifications and restrictions. Hannibal Perkins is pondering over the question of why people get so maddeningly tired of a piece of music, from some favorite of the operas down to the latest bit of "rag-time." They do not get tired of bread and beefsteak! Is the palate wiser than the ear? Even Hannibal Perkins cannot answer that question. Human nature is odd.

CHAPTER XI

THE PORTER'S STORY

From the beginning of the train's delay the porter of the sleeping car had attracted attention unostentatiously. This expression perhaps best describes the man's demeanor. He was, apparently, not much over thirty years of age, and a white man, but for that indefinable something which manifests itself in the bearing of a human being who, by unfortunate stress of circumstances, is fighting the world at a disadvantage. He was a blonde man, six feet in height. There was to his bearing a certain dignity. Yet, he was the porter of the car! It followed, as a practical certainty, that he was of African descent, however much of his blood had come in the intermingling with a preponderence in favor of the Anglo-Saxon.

He looked like a Viking, one of those who sometimes sailed down to Africa, after ravaging the Seine Valley, and taking toll of the monasteries and castles of the Spanish Peninsula en route,—but certainly not like one whose real ancestors, those who made the man, could have been African. The Colonel had recognized the fact that this big blonde man was one of Nature's mistakes in production under too sinister surroundings, and saw, too, that there was a story which might be told readily and impulsively and forcefully, and, perhaps most interestingly, under some momentum of the hour He decided this to be the psychological moment.

"Will you not give us a story, now, John?" he said—he had learned the porter's name the day before, but half hesitated at the familiarity—"I've a fancy you may have more to tell than any of the rest of us. Will you let us know what it is?"

The porter glanced at him curiously but not in any protesting way. It could be seen that he recognized in the other man, a sympathizing human being and he rose to the occasion.

"I will tell you the story," he said,slowly, "though, really, save as possibly amusing somebody for the moment, I scarcely see the object, but it may be that it will afford me a little relief personally. Come to think of it, I don't know that I've ever had a chance to tell my story to intelligent human beings under anything like fair auspices. I'm going to tell it simply and truly. I'll leave the verdict to you. Your verdict cannot help me any, for you are as weak as I am in this case, but this is the story:

HIS PROBLEM

Is it well for me that I am a product of a University, that I am what I am?

Some time ago I read an exceedingly clever poem in some magazine, describing the sufferings of Pierrot, that inimitable and fascinating French modification of Harlequin, ever vainly seeking his elusive Columbine.

"I, who am Pierrot, pity me! Oh pity me!" he cries in his helpless desire for sympathy. Sometimes I feel like Pierrot, though my suffering is not as his.

I hesitate, somehow, at telling my own story lest I be misunderstood or offend in some manner. I have some courage and I'm not asking sympathy in any weak or maudlin way. I am but stating a case, a case with a problem attached and one which I have, so far, been unable to solve, though the quality of my life must depend upon the nature of the solution.

I am neither whining nor begging. The story may or may not possess a degree of interest. I wish I could tell it better.

I am thirty-four years of age, and I think I can fairly say, am well educated; so thorough was my college course and so diligently did I apply myself, that I excel most graduates in the extent of my real acquirements. I have forgotten neither my classics nor my mathematics and I read and speak French and German fluently. I keep myself familiar with what occurs in the field of literature. I chance to have a retentive memory and my perceptions are, it seems to me, at least reasonably keen.

I am six feet in height and, absurd as it may seem in me to say it, am a well formed, well set up man. I have clean cut features, rather aquiline than otherwise, grey eyes, light hair, which curls slightly, and a fair complexion. I am an athlete, trained from boyhood, and have borne myself, I hope, as a man should in encounters in the southwest, where brawn has for the moment counted for more than brains. I describe myself thus directly, but not conceitedly, because I want to be known as you see me, for just what I am. To discredit myself unjustly in the least, to tell less than the truth, would mar the justice of the premises upon which I make my case and from which I make clear, or at least try to make clear, the nature of the problem which has proved too difficult for me.

I have had ambitions, hopes and love. I have known men and women. I have become familiar with the affairs of the world. I am naturally of a buoyant and hopeful disposition and yet I, a strong man, am to-day perplexed, sad, almost hopeless. I have no incumbrances. A healthy, educated man of thirty-four, with no burden of the ordinary sort, and yet disheartened! I can imagine you saying, with an inflection of either pity or contempt. Well, what I have told of myself is the truth and I must take the consequences.

I was born in one of the southern states. One of my grandfathers was a man of standing, and one of my grandmothers was, I am told, a very beautiful woman. My father was also a man of note, a distinguished officer in the civil war who did well in battle. My mother was a woman of exceptional charms of person and character, but died when I was a mere child. I was educated by a wealthy brother of my father, who chanced to take an interest in me. Until the age of twelve

I was the almost constant companion of his own son.

At the age of twelve, my cousin and I who had been so much together were separated, he going to a school in one of the great cities, I to one in a smaller town. After graduation at school we were each sent to college. My cousin went to one of the great universities and I was sent to one of the smaller colleges of the country, but one where the curriculum was extensive and the requirements severe. I studied hard and graduated in the same year with my cousin. We met again at the old homestead and I found that, because of my close attention to my studies, perhaps, too, because of a somewhat quicker apprehension, I excelled him decidedly in acquirements. We passed a not unpleasant month together, hunting and fishing in the old way, but, somehow, it was not the same as it had been when we were boys together. I noticed a change in my cousin's demeanor toward me. His manner was not unkindly, for he is one of the best and most generous of men, but there was a certain change, a certain distance of air which made it plain to me that we could never again be to each other what we had been as boys in the past. We separated each to go out into the world to struggle for himself; I, alone; he, with the influential family and a host of influential friends behind him. I have never seen him since.

Equipped as I was the natural course for me to pursue seemed to be to adopt for a time the work of teaching, not that I inclined toward it, but because it afforded opportunity to acquire a little capital which might enable me to take up a profession. I secured a school without much difficulty in a thriving southwestern town, and at the end of a course of three years had saved several hundred dollars. With the money thus obtained, I graduated at a famous law school, after which I studied diligently for a year in the office of a prominent attorney. I was clerk, porter, office boy, everything about the office, but the distinguished lawyer did me the honor, at the end of the year, to say that I was the most thorough student he had ever assisted and prophesied flatteringly as to my future. I was admitted to the bar with compliments from the examining judges as to my knowledge of the law. I at once established an office in a town of about two thousand people, where the outlook seemed exceptionally promising. I was entirely unknown in the little city, but for two years I prospered beyond my expectations. I knew the law and, as the event showed, I was strong with juries, possessing the power of interesting and winning the confidence of men to an exceptional degree. I won a number of cases, some of them important ones. I became known in the town and in the surrounding district as a public speaker of force and eloquence. Upon the lecture platform or political rostrum I felt as potent and at ease as in the court room. My future seemed assured. I found friends among the best people, my income was more than sufficient for my needs; in my rooms I was accumulating books of the world's literature. My law library was the best in the county. In all things I was flourishing and the world looked bright to me.

One day there came to the town wherein I had established myself a young man who had been in college with me. I was glad to see him and did what I could for him during his stay, though we were unlike in temperament and tastes, and his associates and friends had all been different from mine. He soon left the place, and, not long after, I noticed a surprising change in the manner of the people toward me. I no longer received invitations to dinner nor to social gatherings. No reason was given me for the freezing indifference with which I was treated by my former friends. What was, from one point of view, a matter of as much importance, my business began to drop off; men who had placed their legal affairs in my hands no longer sought me for advice and only an occasional petty case in some justice's court came to afford me a livelihood. After a vain struggle with these intolerable conditions I gave up. I closed my office and left the city.

It was early in June, that year when I left the place where I had hoped to become a lifelong resident and useful citizen.

I drifted east and found myself in Boston. There I met two young men, seniors in college, but poor, who had engaged themselves as men of all work—partly as a midsummer lark, but chiefly for the money to be gained—to work in a great summer hotel in the mountains. A third man was needed, and they asked me if I would not go with them. I was ready for anything, and accepted the invitation.

The hotel was one of the largest in the mountains, and the numerous guests included wealthy and distinguished families from all parts of the country. That we were college-bred men and had students' ambitions also became known, and it came to pass, at last, that our duties for the day accomplished, we appeared in evening dress, and joined in the evening's amusements, laughed at in a friendly way, and jesting ourselves in return.

I cannot go into further details of the happenings of that summer at the mountain resort, where all was healthy and healthful except my own mentality, which had been made what it was by conditions over which I had no control. I prayed, and prayer, while it strengthened me, did not help me bow to the injustice under which I suffered. I thought and tried to find what a logical brain, a broad view of things, and a keen intelligence might do, and that did not help me. Ever, ever came the same inevitable deduction. I was a hunted wretch, pursued by a social and partly natural law, driven ever into a cul de sac, into a side gorge in the mountains of life, a short gorge with precipitous walls on either side and ending suddenly and briefly in a wall as perpendicular and high and smooth. True, I had for the moment escaped, for the instant I was free, but I knew that soon, inevitably, the cordon would hem me in and that I would be at the mercy of the pursuers—the unmalicious but instinctively impelled pursuers. Then came a respite from the torturing thought, a forgetfulness for the moment, a forgetfulness to be paid for.

I was the man with the boats and, as well the guide who conducted individuals or parties to and from all the picturesque or curious spots of the wild region round about the summer resort which shrewd capitalists had implanted in the heart of nature. So it came that I met all, or nearly all the guests, groups who had chaffed at me, and yet, knowing my status, made me one of them. Strong young men and good ones made me a comrade, fathers and mothers of broods of little children leaned on me, and at last and worse in the end, the occasional woman who thought for herself, knew nature for herself and wanted but to go out alone to meet her sister, that same Nature, became my companion. There was one among those who, to me, was above the other women. There was one among those—may the good God ever have her in his keeping—who, from no thought or fault of hers, has given me the greatest vision of happiness and also such sorrow as few men know.

Then I seemed to live for the first time and now it is still a thought deep in my mind that it was my only taste of real life when I held communion on lake and shore in that enchanted summer with the woman who held my heart in her white hands. No doubt I was guilty, frightfully guilty. What right has a pariah in a world of caste? But I am a human. I drifted and drifted. I cannot analyze my own feelings at the time. I knew that I was good and honest and as real in mind as she and yet, even then, I think I felt as if I were some vagrant who had wandered into a church and was inanely fumbling at the altar-cloth.

Like every other rainbow that ever spanned my miserable sky it disappeared, not gradually, as do other rainbows when the clouds part slowly and the sun shines out between them, but suddenly, leaving blackness. One wild but simply honest letter I wrote telling all things, and then came silence. There was only the information that one fair guest of the great summer resort had departed suddenly.

Yet in my letter I had told of nothing but a life of steadfast honor, principle, and high ambition and endeavor; I began to lose heart. I am a wanderer. What am I to do? I am a man without a country as much as was poor Nolan in Edward Everett Hale's immortal story, though unlike Nolan, I am blameless of even a moment's lapse of patriotism. I am without a country because my country will not give me what it gives to other men. I am even without a race, for that to which I really belong neglects me and with that into which my own would thrust me I have nothing in common. The presence of a faint strain of alien blood is killing me by inches.

I am not black, I am white. Does one part of, perhaps, some African chieftain's blood offset thirty-one of white blood from good ancestors? I do not believe in miscegenation. There is some subtle underlying law of God and nature which forbids the close contact in any way of the different races. It is to me a horror. But I am not black, I am white. A negro woman is to me as she is to any other white man. A negro man is to me as of a strange race. A white man is to me my brother. All my thoughts, all my yearnings, are to be with him, to talk with him, to sympathize with him in all the affairs of life, to help him and have him help me, to go to war with him, if need be, to die by his side. I am a white man.

But there is that one thirty-second of pariah blood. "Pity me, oh pity me."

As I have said, I began to lose heart. There is no need to tell all the story. I remember it all. One or two incidents suffice to show the way I have traveled.

Once in an eastern city, I obtained work as a brakeman on a freight train on the railway. At first my fellow workers received me well, named me Byron, some knowing me among them, with rude but kindly chaffing at my pale face and studious habits, for when not at work I had ever a book in my hand.

One day, while we were waiting on a siding near a small station, a tramp recognized me. He was a man I had defended in court for some small offense, in the distant western town where I practiced law. I had him kept out of jail by my pleading. I had believed that his arrest and trial would be a lesson such as would keep him from the idle and vicious ways he was just beginning to follow at that time.

The tramp rode a few miles on our train. After that the train crew ceased to consort with me. They looked sullenly upon me and muttered among themselves when I came near them. The engineer looked the other way when he had to speak to me. His face was grim and sad, as well, but he looked the other way. There was no outbreak, but I could not endure my position. I left the railroad work as soon as our train arrived in the city where the company made its headquarters.

Once again, some years after the railway episode, I thought to work on a street-car line. I applied for the position of motorman, and was well received by the superintendent to whom I reported after he had in reply to my letter, asked me to call at his office. I gave, at his request, the names of a half a dozen responsible men as references as to my character and responsibility. I arranged with a security company for giving the required bond, and was told that as soon as favorable answers were received from my friends I would be put to practice work; I felt assured of a position, laborious and nerve testing, it is true, but respectable and reasonable well paid.

After two weeks I called upon the superintendent again, although he had not written, as he promised to do, after hearing from the men I had referred him to.

He was a hard man of business, that superintendent, but he spoke to me kindly, regretfully, almost shamefacedly. The testimonials to my character and life were, he said, very flattering to me. No one had said anything but good of me. But it would never do, he explained, for me to be set to work on the road. The men would be sure to find out the truth about me, sooner or later, and then the officials of the road would be blamed. There was sure to be trouble. Personally, the superintendent had, he said, no "race prejudices," but he could not answer for the feelings of others less free from the influence of tradition and natural aversion.

I stood silent while the man of my own race calmly, even tenderly, waved me back into the ranks of a people of whose blood a few drops only run in my veins. So another gate was closed. So I was once more forced into the narrow bounds of an invisible prison.

My mother had one-sixteenth of negro blood in her veins and was a slave. Now what explains my most unfortunate condition? Is it because this ancestor had this trace of the blood of another race, and that I have one thirty-second part of the same blood, though I chance to be whiter than most Caucasians? Well, God made the races. Is it because this ancestor was a slave? So were the Britons slaves of the Romans. My father was a descendant of some slave. He is not responsible for the chase of his mother in ancient woods and for her capture by some fierce avaricious Roman legionary who knew the value of a breeder of sturdy Teutonic brawn in making Roman highways. It was through no fault of mine that the Arab trader chased my great-great-great-grandmother or grandfather down in the jungle and sold her to the sallow-faced slave dealer who brought her to America. The blood of my father's ancestors became intermixed with that of the captors. My father's race became free. So has mine. The difference is but in time. Why is it, then, that I am as I am? I do not want to become a barber, nor a porter, nor an attendant in a Turkish bath, nor to serve other men. I do not want to work upon the streets, though I am not afraid of manual labor nor do I count it dishonorable. But I am a cultivated man, a man skilled in a profession where intelligence and training are required, a man of moral character and refined tastes. I am starving for the companionship of my own kind. Brain and heart, I am starving. What am I to do?

Pity me, good people, Oh, pity me!

CHAPTER XII

THE PURPLE STOCKING

There was unaccustomed silence for a time after the Porter finished speaking. He left the car at once, perturbed, it may be, by his own disclosure of his condition and emotions. Those who had listened to him, whatever may have been their views concerning one of the great problems of the age, could not but feel a certain sympathy for the man condemned to be thus isolated—the man without a race. That his case might be somewhat exceptional detracted in no way from its curious pathos. It was recognized as one of the tragedies of human life as it is, and the recital had induced a thoughtful mood among the Porter's audience. What should be the attitude of the ordinary man or woman in a case like this? And, seeking honestly in their own minds, those pondering could not answer the question satisfactorily, either to judgment or to conscience. By what law should they be guided?

The Colonel was among the thinkers, but

he rose superior, as usual. That gilded optimist wanted not even reflection among the snowbound. Had his company been of males exclusively he might even have been tempted to introduce the flowing bowl, but for his knowledge of the inevitable depressing aftermath. He wanted but carelessness and distraction and forgetfulness until the time of pale monotony should end. Now he was tempted to an act most ruthless and unconjugal.

His glance was toward his wife, whom he adored openly, and toward whom he, at all times, showed the greatest consideration, but who, through some prescience, was fidgeting a little.

"Madam," he began pompously, slapping his hand upon his chest, "the husband is the head of the family—he really isn't," he added in an audible aside, "but we'll assume it for the present. Madam, he is the head of the family and must be obeyed. I order, command and direct you to tell a story; if need be I will even abdicate for the moment and so far humiliate myself as to implore you to tell a story. Tell about that affair which took place at the Grand Cattaraugus, when we were stopping there last summer."

The pleasant-faced lady appeared hesitant: "But it's almost a naughty story," she protested; "it's about a stocking, and, oh dear! there's something about a" —and she blushed prettily, as is always the case when a middle-aged woman thus demeans herself, "there's an ankle in it, too."

"Nonsense," retorted the Colonel. "Do you mean in the story or in the stocking? In either case an ankle is all right. Go ahead, my dear."

Mrs. Livingston yielded: "After all," she said, "it's not so very wicked and the story is chiefly about matching colors, which is a subject not unlikely to interest ladies. Anyhow, it interested me in this instance. I know all the shocking circumstances, and, since I've gone so far I may as well be reckless. I suppose the story might be called

THE PURPLE STOCKING

Maxwell, a gentleman stopping at the hotel, was bored. There existed no particular excuse for his frame of mind, but the fact remained. He had fairly earned a vacation, but when the time came for escape from the midsummer heat of his offices he had found himself with no well-defined idea of where his outing should be spent. Circumstances rendered it necessary that it should be a brief one this time, else he would have known what to do with himself, for the man knew the Rocky Mountains. As it was, he had but taken train for one of the nearby summer resorts, where the Grand Cattaraugus caravansary, consisting, as those places do, of an enormous piazza with a hotel attached to its rear, loomed up beside and overlooked the pretty hill-surrounded lake with its blue waters, narrow beach and many pleasure boats. It was not a bad place and Maxwell had decided that it would be endurable for a week or two, especially after the arrival of his friend, Jim Farrington, who had promised to follow and loaf genially with him.

But first impressions are not always final. Maxwell found the hotel full of people, mostly women. It was a fashionable place, and the women were fair to look upon, but there were not men enough to go round. There were two or three dowagers who knew Maxwell and, seek to avoid it as he might, he was soon generally introduced and his eligibility made widely known. Then came monotonous attention and, for his own peace, the man, who hadn't come after women, was driven to daily exile either to his room or to the lake or hills. The elder ladies with daughters hunted him as hounds might hunt a rabbit. He resolved promptly upon escape and, within a week, an afternoon found him engaged in packing for that purpose.

His laundry had just come in and among the articles he picked up first were a lot of blazing silken handkerchiefs. Colored silk handkerchiefs were a fad of his in summer. He tossed them idly into his valise when the color of one of them attracted his attention.

"I never owned a handkerchief like that," he muttered.

He raised the article to examine it more closely, and to his amazement it unfolded and lengthened out. It was not a handkerchief at all. It was a lady's stocking—a brilliant purple stocking!

Maxwell wondered. "Washing's been mixed," he said, and then devoted closer and more earnest attention to his prize. It was a charming affair, small of foot but not too small otherwise, and possessed, somehow, an especial symmetry, even in its present state.

"It's number eight—number three shoe,"

thought Maxwell, "and it's the prettiest stocking I ever saw."

His comment was fully justified. The stocking was a dream in its department of lingerie. The purple was relieved, from the ankle upward a little way, by a clocking of snow-white sprays of lilies-of-the-valley, and the purple itself was of such a hue as to send one dreaming of the glories of the ancients. It was a wonderful stocking, a fascinating stocking. It lured like a will-o'-the wisp.

Maxwell abandoned his packing and sat stroking and admiring the hypnotizing object. He became vastly interested. "I wonder whom it belongs to?" he mused. Then—there's no explaining it with authority, and discreetly—a sudden fancy seized upon him. "I'll not leave to-night!" he said, "I'll find the owner of that stocking! It will give me something to do and add a little zest to things. Might as well be stocking-hunting as anything else. By Jove, what a neat little foot she must have!"

The packing was left undone. The man had an object now, one which might have seemed trivial to the bloodless and unimaginative, but which to him became a serious matter. Talk about the Round Table fellows after the Holy

Grail or Diogenes after an honest man, they were not in it with Maxwell! He dawdled and mooned over that stocking and made and unmade plans. He bribed a gentleman, youthful and dirty, connected with the laundry department of the hotel, and it came to naught. His gaze was ever downward. He appeared more frequently on the piazza among the scores of "porchers" engaged in idle converse there. He strolled along the little beach, ever with furtive eyes on twinkling feet, and neat ones he saw galore and stockings rainbow-hued galore, but never a purple one among them.

It was the quality of the purple, he decided, which must have so enthralled him in the first place. He had never seen a purple like it. He read up on purples. He learned that royal purple is made up of fifty-five parts red, twelve parts blue and thirty-three parts black, and concluded that the stocking must be almost a royal purple, so wonderfully did the white lilies show out against its richness. Tyrian purple he rejected as being too dull for the comparison. Then he considered the purple of Amorgos, the wonderfully brilliant color obtained from the seaweed of the Grecian island, and this met with greater favor in his eyes.

He decided, finally, that the hue of the stocking was between the royal and the purple of Amorgos, and this relieved his mind. But this didn't help him to find the girl—and how vain a thing is even the most beautiful stocking in the world without a girl attached!

Then the unexpected happened as usual. There came a lapse in the search. The cure for Maxwell's dream was homeopathic. Like cures like. One girl blighted most of interest in the vague search for another. Maxwell was caught by the concrete. Miss Ward, a guest of the hotel, in company with her aunt, was not, Maxwell decided, like any of the other women. She was dignified, but piquant, pretty, certainly, and well educated. Likewise, she had self-possession and much wit. Maxwell enjoyed her society and they became close friends. He began to feel as if the world, if hollow, had at least a substantial crust. He was no longer bored and the stocking fancy was put aside.

Then came Farrington. Farrington had spirits. He lightened up the hotel piazza and flirted with every one, from dowagers down to the little girls to whom he told liver-colored stories as evening and the gloom came. He was deeply interested when Maxwell told him of the stocking and the marvel. He became full of ardor.

"Don't give up the search!" he expostulated. "Such a stocking as that must belong to the one woman in four hundred and eighty-three thousand. Why, it's like finding a nugget in a valley! There's bound to be gold in the mountains!"

So the interest of Maxwell became largely revived and his mind was on stockings when he was not in the company of Miss Ward. One day an inspiration came to him with the gentle suddenness of a love pat. He took Farrington into his confidence. That evening on the piazza that gifted friend adroitly turned the conversation to the subject of matching goods and colors.

The debate became most animated. The ladies, one and all, declared that in the matter of matching things men were scarcely above the beasts that perish, while as for themselves, there was not a woman, young or old, among them who was not an adept. Maxwell, who had seemed at first uninterested, broke into the conversation.

"I'm not ungallant," he asserted as a preliminary. "When it comes to gallantry I'll venture to say I'd outdo any medieval troubadour, if I could only sing and twang a harp, but, though angels can do almost anything, to tell the truth I'm a shade doubtful concerning their absolute infallibility in matching hues and fabrics. I've a piece of silk I'd like matched for my sister, and I hereby, in the presence of all witnesses, offer a prize of one box of gloves to any lady who will match it for me within a week," and he produced about six inches square—thirty-six square inches—of splendid purple silk.

As the war horse snuffeth the battle and says "Ha! ha!" to the trumpets; as the sea mew rises from the waves to riot in the spindrift; as the needle to the pole; as the river to the sea or the cat to the catnip in wild enthusiasm—so rose the ladies to the silken lure. Match the silk? Why, the gloves must be distributed among the score!

And then ensued a busy week. The sample, divided into thirty-six pieces an inch square, was surrendered. There were trips to the nearest city and, as excitement grew, even to the metropolis. The afternoon for the test arrived and Maxwell, seated judicially beside a table on the piazza and provided with another sample of his silk, awaited with manly dignity the onslaught of the gathered contestants.

One by one they came and laid down their little pieces of purple silk; one by one the samples were compared by the judge with the piece held in his hand, and, one by one, he passed them back with a regretful and unnecessarily audible sigh. Last of all came Miss Ward, who had not been to town and who had, apparently, taken slight interest in the competition. It was too trivial for her, had been Maxwell's firm conclusion. Now she approached the table and laid down, as had the others, a piece of purple silk. Maxwell's heart thumped. There was no mistaking that wondrous hue!

"Miss Ward has won the gloves," he said.

There were congratulations and any amount of fun and curious speculation.

That evening Maxwell caught Miss Ward upon the piazza and induced her to sit with him awhile, to improve his mind, he said They chatted indifferently until he took occasion to compliment her upon her success in matching the purple silk. "You have a wonderful sense of color," he declared.

She answered that she had always enjoyed matching things, and then he ventured to expatiate a little on the particular silk which had been matched: "What pretty trimming for a hat, or what pretty stockings it would make," he said.

She asked him why the nighthawks circling overhead and about gave utterance to their shrill cries so frequently, and he said he didn't know. Then they talked about the coming boat race.

For a week Maxwell's chief occupation was what Farrington described as "concentrated musing." He walked much. One afternoon he was strolling along the narrow beach, which lay, a sandy stretch, between the water and a tree-grown grassy ledge, about fifteen feet in height, which was a favorite place of rest and outlook for the hotel guests. He was looking downward, but there came a moment when the heavens fell. Chancing to look upward to determine if any of the usual idlers there were of a companionable sort for him, he saw that which turned aside the current of his life as easily as an avalanche may turn a rivulet.

There, projecting a little beyond the crest-crowning grass and greenery of the ledge above, was something trim and gloriously purple and gloriously perfect. The tan of the neatest of number three shoes blended upward into the purple paradise, and from the tan seemed growing a snowy spray of lilies-of-the-valley. Delicate is the subject, but it must be treated. Delicate is the making of a watch, but we must have watches; eggs are delicate, but we must eat them; goldfish are delicate, but we must lift them by hand occasionally. Duty first!

Perfect the exterior of that wondrous stocking, perfect, absolutely so, but its contour and its contents! Ah, me! The flat, thin ankle—let Arabian fillies hide their heads! The even upward swell—just full enough, just trim enough, revealed, but not in view, as one sees things by starlight. Ah, me!

Maxwell's eyes dimmed and he reeled. What is known as locomotor ataxia smote him there suddenly in his prime and pride of life. Then after a moment or two a degree of health came back and he turned and retraced his steps, feebly at first, then more rapidly, and then as hies the antlered stag. He gained the ledge and followed it and found Miss Ward seated demurely at its very crest and surrounded by a group of friends.

Within three months he owned, after the

wedding, not merely what was left of one, but two similar purple stockings, and their contents, together with, all and singular, the hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging or in anywise appertaining.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FATTENING OF PAT

The general opinion seemed to be that the amiable lady's story was innoccuous in every detail, while it commended itself as being absolutely true to human nature, that great essential in a narrative of any sort. There were the feminine instinct as to the matching of colors, inbred throughout each latitude, and the masculine instinct in relation to stockings, existent in every longitude, each indicated with all assuredness and delicacy. The account, it was declared by the Young Lady, was a veritable "Idyl of an Outing," and no one disagreed with her. Then came renewed expression of the now constant anxiety and curiosity regarding the progress of the rescuers and Stafford went forward to learn the situation, and report.

"We're in 'in a hole,' literally," came, the reply to Stafford's inquiry of the engineer in charge of the relief train; "That's all we make, at first, merely a hole, when we charge into the big drift ahead of us now. It's thirty feet deep and we can't do much more than loosen up things, just here, and let the shovelers do the rest. It will be better when we get through this cut. We've sent men on ahead and they find the thing not nearly so bad half a mile from here. We're getting along."

"But, how fast are you getting along?" queried Stafford impatiently. "When are you going to reach us?"

"I can't tell. I'm getting a little doubtful about the fourth day, now. Still, we may make it. How are you fixed for heat and provisions?"

"All right yet, I guess. I'll find out and let you know later," and Stafford went back to the sleeper.

The bearer of unpleasant news is seldom received with an ovation and Stafford proved no exception. There were the usual plaints, but he did not notice them. Somehow, he had no interest in deliverance. He was satisfied to be where he was. He was living entirely in the present and what was near him. He looked about for the Far Away Lady, but she was not visible, and he indulged in a fit of moodiness, like a boy. He lingered with the company until the time for retiring came and then went forward to the smoking compartment, where the usual group of the gregarious were enjoying themselves. Here he found relaxation of thought, at least, and, to a degree, amusement.

He entered as there was being related an incident of politics. It was told by a man portly, ruddy-faced and wearing a gold watch chain, weighty enough for a small cable, from which depended the emblems of two or three of the great secret fraternities. Though in the drawing-room gatherings he had appeared somewhat less in his element than here, he had become rather a favorite because of his unfailing good nature and evident shrewdness and sense of humor. He was known as a "commissioner" of something in one of the large cities, a typical city politician. He was relating the difficulties experienced in what he called

THE FATTENING OF PAT

Pat, who was an excellent janitor, in charge of a big bank building, with men under him, had aspirations. He wanted to become a policeman. The place he held was a good one and most men of his class would have been contented, but Pat was not. He was dissatisfied with the monotonous indoor life and decided that to be on the "foorce" was the only thing for him. He was a fine fellow, overflowing with energy and full of persistence, he would not, however advised, abandon the idea. He was a tall, muscular man and, aside from the qualities already mentioned, was possessed of good sense and was of excellent habits. He had friends among the tenants of the big structure over the care of which he presided and when, realizing that to attain the object of his desire some strong alliance would be necessary he appealed for aid to an occupant of one of the offices in the building, a young man, who, if not in politics as a business, knew something of the game, he met with no discouragement.

"I'll do what I can, Pat," said Wheaton.

The Municipal Civil Service Commission had just been established in the City and was yet "wobbly" and, to a degree, swayed by political influences. Under the direction of Wheaton, who decided to see fair play, Pat underwent the usual preliminary examination, passed admirably as to all questions and would have passed physically, as well, but for his weight, or rather the lack of it. The required weight for a policeman of his height was one hundred and sixty-five pounds; Pat weighed only one hundred and fifty, for he was as gaunt as an Australian. Other men lacking as many pounds of the weight nominally demanded had secured places with no difficulty, but Pat was not desired by those in authority. His political views were not of the right sort for the examiners and his manner showed his independence. Fortunately for him, the first examination was only a preliminary—(A delay allowed the politicians time to select their men among the many)—and a second and final one was announced to take place four weeks after the first. Pat came to his friend almost with tears in his eyes:

"Oi'm done fur," said he.

"What's the matter?" demanded Wheaton.

"Oi'm fifteen pounds short," said Pat.

"How long before the next examination?"

"Four wakes."

"Pshaw," said Wheaton. "We'll fix it, yet. I'm not going to let those fellows squeeze you out. Will you do just as I tell you?"

"Oi will, begobs!" was the sturdy answer.

"Well you must begin to-morrow morning. You've got two sub-janitors, haven't you?"

"Oi have," said Pat.

"You can make them do all the work, if you want to, can't you?"

"Oi can that!"

"Then what I want you to do is this—and, mind, I'm going to take charge of the whole thing and foot the bills; they won't be much—I don't want you to do a lick of work for the next four weeks. I want you to stay in your room about all the time: you mustn't even walk about much. I want you to eat nothing but potatoes and bread with about a quarter of an inch thick of butter and sugar on it Eat lots! You can have meat, too, if it's very fat. And—you're a sober man and I don't believe you'll get a fixed habit in four weeks—I'm going to send a keg of beer to your room in the morning, and another whenever one is finished. You're to drink a big mug of it every hour."

"Blazes," interjected Pat, "Th' ould lady'll murther me. Oi'll be drunk, sure, an' me breath will breed a peshtiliench."

"No it won't. You'll soon get used to it. We begin to-morrow."

And the next day Pat began, resolutely,

though with fears. Wheaton visited him frequently and encouraged him in every way; "I'll get you all the newspapers and teach you to play solitaire—it's a fine game with cards when you're alone. You're a goose," he said "and I'm training you for *pate de fois gras,*" but Pat did not know what that meant. He only knew that times were queer. He was afraid of the "ould lady."

The third morning he came down beaming. "It's quare," he announced. "Oi belave th' ould lady do be fallin' in love wid me over agin, she does be that foine an' carressin' wid me. 'Pat!' says she, 'you're the new mon intoirely! You do be as gentle as a lamb an' it's good to see ye so playful wid the childer' says she. 'Oi'm in love wid ye, Pat' says she. An' Oi all the toime falin' loike a baste, for I knew well 'twas only the mellowness av the beer in me. But it's given me a lesson it has. Oi'll be betther tempered after this."

"Good idea," said Wheaton.

At the end of the first week Wheaton took Pat out and weighed him, undressed—four pounds gained.

"We must do better than that," commented Wheaton. "We'll barely pull through at this gait, and it will be harder work getting on flesh the last two weeks. Do you take your beer every hour?"

"O'm beginning to spake Dutch," said Pat.

"Well, keep on with it and eat—eat like a hobo! We'll make it! Don't exercise, don't even wink, if you can help it."

Pat took his instructions literally and obeyed them. He stayed in his room and gorged. His eyes became a trifle heavy and his face flushed, but at the end of two weeks he weighed only one hundred and fifty-nine pounds. Somehow, the next week he didn't do so well, gaining only three pounds more. Dame Nature, in mistaken kindness, was trying to adjust him to his new diet. Wheaton was becoming excited—only one hundred and sixty-two pounds, and only a week to gain something over three more in!

"We must hump ourselves!"

And Pat did "hump" himself, ate and drank with an assumed voracity, and had a slight attack of indigestion. This didn't help matters. The night before the examination he weighed only one hundred and sixty-four pounds and four ounces—three quarters of a pound short!

Wheaton was anxious but not despairing.

"The examination begins at ten," he said. "Meet me here at four o'clock in the morning. We'll have six hours left."

At the hour named in the morning came Wheaton, carrying a big jug. "Have you had any beer, yet, Pat?" he asked.

"No sor."

"Then don't take any. You must be clear-headed when you go before the Commission. Here's a gallon of water, good water it is. You must drink it all before ten o'clock."

Pat looked dismayed. "Oi'll try sor."

Then began the struggle. Pat washed down his breakfast at once, very salt-broiled mackerel—which Wheaton had brought,—with the usual potatoes and a big beefsteak. After that every five minutes, Wheaton forced the poor fellow to drink a glass of water. At half-past nine the gallon was done. Pat, like the tea-drinkers of Ebenezer Chapel, "swelled wisibly." But Wheaton made him drink more water.

"Oi feel loike a fishpond, sor," he complained.

They hurried to the nearest Turkish bath and Pat stripped and got upon the scales. He weighed one hundred and sixty-five pounds and three ounces. Pat was perspiring violently.

"If you sweat, I'll murder you!" said Wheaton.

They appeared before the Commission, Wheaton watching everything like a hawk, his heart in his mouth as the weighing test came. One hundred and sixty-five pounds and one ounce! There was no getting around it!

"Pat," said Wheaton, later, "You're on the force now and you've had a lesson in practical politics. You ought to be a sergeant in no time."

"Politics is aisy," said Pat, "but Oi'm thinkin' Oi'll be changin' me diet. Oi'm forninst beer and bread and butther forever—an'" he added, reflectively, "Oi dunno but wather, too!"

"He's making a good policeman," concluded the Commissioner.

So ended the relation of Pat's experience, and, a little later, the laughing group in the smoking room dissolved itself. Stafford sought his berth, largely recovered from his discontent and more like his reliant self. But he was not assured as to his dreams. Would his conscience be with him still? Could the line of conventional demarcation between him and the Far

Away Lady be rigorously preserved, even in them?

But no dreams came to him at once. He could not sleep at first but struggled with himself. He was tumultuous and impatient with his environment and obligations, all, seemingly, standing in the way of his happiness. He was lost, utterly, in the old conflict which comes with the hesitation between the recognized right and wrong, the accepted thing at the time in the age of the earth in which he lived? To his aid, he quoted to himself the sayings of the keen thinkers, the abstract reasoners: he thought of Anatole France: "What is morality? Morality is the rule of custom and custom is the rule of habit. Morality is, then, the rule of habit. Morality changes, continually with custom, of which it is only the general idea." He thought of the others, too, of one who reasoned from the fact that there were a Jewish morality, a Christian morality, a Buddhist morality, and all that. In his half sleep he mumbled; "Why, Reason is the thing," and then he added mumblingly and reflectively, "but then we have learned that there is a right and reason must end by being right. There is a right—we know that; we feel it—and we know what it is.

It is, largely, a subordination, a regard for others. We cannot quite justify ourselves for any selfishness by quoting some great law of nature. Conscience, somehow, has become the greatest of these laws."

And so, vaguely and jumblingly, as his senses oozed into sleep, he quoted failingly, the cold thinkers. Then the real dreams came to him, but they were misty and bizarre. He was with the Far Away Lady, but the surroundings were all strange and she was most elusive. They were in a great house and he could hear her voice but he could not find her, though he searched from room to room. Then they were in a forest where there were many flowers and tall trees and she was a bird somewhere up in the trees and he could hear her singing, but he could not see her amid the foliage. And, finally, they were where there was much shrubbery and where he could see her plainly enough, but she was at a distance and as he followed she would disappear among the roses down some garden path. All was most tantalizing and fantastic. And so his night passed.

CHAPTER XIV

A TEST OF ATTITUDE

What are they going to do, a man and a woman who have met and loved in the past, and have separated conscientiously, when brought together again under extraordinary circumstances, after each has felt that loving and of real living had been denied, and endured it all for years? What is going to happen when, because of one of the accidents of life and of one of the great accomplishing conditions, such two as this have been, once more, thrown, figuratively, into each other's arms?

This man had saved this woman's life yesterday, stumbling upon her after all this separation, after he done a man's work in another hemisphere and had, disappointed with life, supposed the chapter closed. Now he was to meet her at the breakfast table. What must be the demeanor of these two toward each other now? Be assured neither of them knew, not even the woman,—and in foreseeing as to such a situation a woman knows more, by some instinct, than a man may learn in a thousand years.

She knew that they would meet that morning. That was the inevitable, after yesterday. Anything else would have been a foolish affectation. He knew, as well, that he must go in to that breakfast table and sit opposite her and that then they must face together a situation delicately psychological and dangerous and altogether fascinating—from a philosopher's point of view. It was not perhaps, quite so fascinating to these two people with what we call conscience and the possession of what makes the greatness of humanity, whether it appertain to man or woman. There is no sex to nobility.

She was sitting there, divinely sweet, as he stalked in. She was sitting there, divinely sweet, because she was made that way, and never did Stafford realize it more. The years had taken from her gentle beauty not the slightest toll.

She bloomed this fair morning—it was only moderately fair, by the way—as there entered the man who had saved her life the day before and with whom in the past hers had been the closest understanding of her life. To the eye she was merely placid and infinitely enchanting.

The man did not appear to such advantage. He entered blunderingly and doubtful.

There were, of course, the usual expression of morning courtesies and then they settled down to a fencing which was but a lovingness as vast as unexpressed. They talked of a variety of things but there was no allusion even so near as Saturn, to what was lying close against the hearts of both. We are rather fine but we are unexplainable sometimes, we men and women whom Nature made so curiously.

As a matter of fact, this one of the most forceful of men and one of the most sweet and desirable of women said practically nothing throughout the entire breakfast. They did not even refer to the grim incident of the dog and the grapple, which had been something worth while. Had the thing been less they would have talked about it. But, to them, by an indefinable knowing, this matter was something too great to consider at the present moment. And, so, unconsciously, understanding each other, they consigned themselves to ordinary table talk.

But we cannot always command lack of remembrance and get obedience. There is something better. Nature has her ways. One of her ways is to have given us eyes, and how she did place us under her soft thumb when she did that!

They said very little, but they looked into each other's eyes. They couldn't help that very well. Then the laws of life worked themselves out. It is a way they have.

What are you going to do with a woman's eyes? Inside the depths of a woman's eyes, lurking lovingly, sometimes, are all the revelations that must come when the time comes and reflect themselves into the looking-glasses God provides to tell us of the thoughts of others. There are different women and different eyes, of course. We must take our chances on that.

And, so as said, they did not even refer to the happenings of the day before or of any of the context of all that had occurred. They did not refer to the great hound. They talked of nothing but of things incidental. She asked him when they would probably be released from their snow imprisonment and he told her that it would be within two days.

And, so they separated and had practically said nothing.

But eyes, as announced, are the most astonishing things. They had talked a great deal that morning. As we human beings are made, they are a little the neatest and finest expression of all there is in life. They hold and send forth the beaconing flash from every intellectual and loving light-house in the world. They are, with what they say, the confessional between any two human beings, man and woman, in the world. They are the mediums of revelation. No wonder that those who know want sometimes, foolishly, it may be, to die when to them comes a physical blindness which may not be remedied.

And this man and woman looked into each other's eyes, he hardly comprehending at first but having the great consciousness come to him at last, she doubtless understanding sooner, and even more acutely.

Intelligent fluttering of the heart is what might possibly be said of her. She was alarmed and yet, from another point of view, entirely without fear. She realized the situation better than did he. Ever since the world was first firmly encrusted out of the steaming fog woman has been the braver of the two in our love affairs.

Exceedingly clever as these two people were, there is no opportunity to do any exceedingly brilliant work in telling all about them. Brought down to its last analysis, theirs was but the plain, old-fashioned love which has stood the test of all the centuries and which, in our modern English and American times, has the flavor of the hollyhocks which grow about the front fence and the old-fashioned pinks in the yard and a lot of other things. We have new ways in other things, but love has not changed much since the time of Egypt. Doubtless it was about the same way before

"What is the day of the week, please," had been Stafford's last utterance. She did not even reply. She looked back into his eyes and that look, if it could have been weighed, could have been considered by nothing but Troy weight, the jeweller's weight, and then it would have been too coarse for the occasion and the demand.

And so they separated and had practically said nothing.

Not the great Sultán Schariar, when listening to the fair Scheherazade, as she prolonged her life from day to day and finally saved it by the fascination of her stories; not the august hearer, as Sinbad the Sailor described his marvelous adventures; not Margaret of Angouléme, as she gathered the more lettered ladies and gallants of her court and induced them to add to the gayety of nations by the relation of brisk and risque experiences; not Dickens, as he spun the threads himself of his Tales of a Wayside Inn, had a more keen enjoyment than the Colonel listening to the words of his drafted and mustered volunteers. He fairly glowed appreciation and satisfaction. As Stafford entered the Cassowary, he perceived that the Colonel was still recruiting.

CHAPTER XV

A SAMOAN IDYL

Among the passengers from one of the other coaches who had occasionally visited the Cassoway and listened as the novel symposium progressed was a brown-bearded, middle-aged gentleman with a tanned face and merry eye. That he was of the navy the Colonel had soon learned, and to the naval officer he now addressed himself:

"Lieutenant, you, necessarily, have visited many parts of the world and must have become acquainted with the facts of many a pretty romance or rough adventure. I believe you mentioned the circumstance that you were stationed for a time in the Samoan islands. Can you tell us a tale of Samoa?"

The Lieutenant smiled: "I'll tell you a tale of Samoa, a little one," he said. "I was a witness to its main incident, and it interested me. It was this way:

A SAMOAN IDYL

Una Loa was a Samoan girl, and she was

fair to look upon. They have festivities in their season in Samoa as we have here, and, as here, there are rivalries among the young women. There are tests of beauty, too, and she who can show the most beautiful head-dress of flowers is counted the most charming among the maidens. She is as the Jersey heifer which takes the first prize at the annual fair in some prosperous county; she is as the lithe and graceful and beautiful creature who doesn't fall over her train at the receptions at the Court of England; she is an adornment to the society in which she moves, and, in Samoa, it must of course be the best society, must consist of those who enter into the contest exhibiting the sublimity of all head-gear—for head-gear is a woman's glory.

There was stationed upon one of the islands of the Samoan Group—there is no use of mentioning the island in particular—a young gentleman who had been sent out under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture of the United States, and, to speak more definitely, from that branch of the Department which is known as the Weather Bureau. His business was to sit at the top of a somewhat illy-constructed tower and note the variations of wind and temperature and all that sort of thing, and then send his report to the Department at Washington, when he could catch a steamer, which didn't always often happen, for this was some time ago. Still he sat up in the tower and took notes and glowered, and made the best of things, and the work in this region of mild latitude and much lassitude did not wear upon him to such an extent that he could not fall in love, not in the purely abstract way that he loved some things either, as for instance, the equation of the parabola, but vigorously and deeply.

He fell in love to such an extent that he became personally interested in the contest among the fair Samoans as to whom among the belles should show the most ardent and effective floral decoration of her mass of hair on the day appointed.

Now, be it known that the Atlantic Ocean is the Atlantic ocean, that the Washington Monument is the Washington Monument. They exist as they are. Be it known also, that the hair of a Samoan beauty, a great burnished mass, also exists as it is and is rarely washed between the rising of the sun and the dropping into the ocean of the same luminary, or at any other time.

The name of the young man connected with the Weather Bureau was John Thompson. That is not a very poetic name, but John Thompson can love just as hard as Everard Argyle. This John Thompson did anyhow, and he vowed that his sweetheart should win in the contest of flowery decorations of the heads of the maidens. This resolve came upon him some six weeks before the time of trial. He visited Una Loa.

"How long is it, sweetheart, since you let your hair down?" said he.

"I do not remember," said she.

"That is all right," said he.

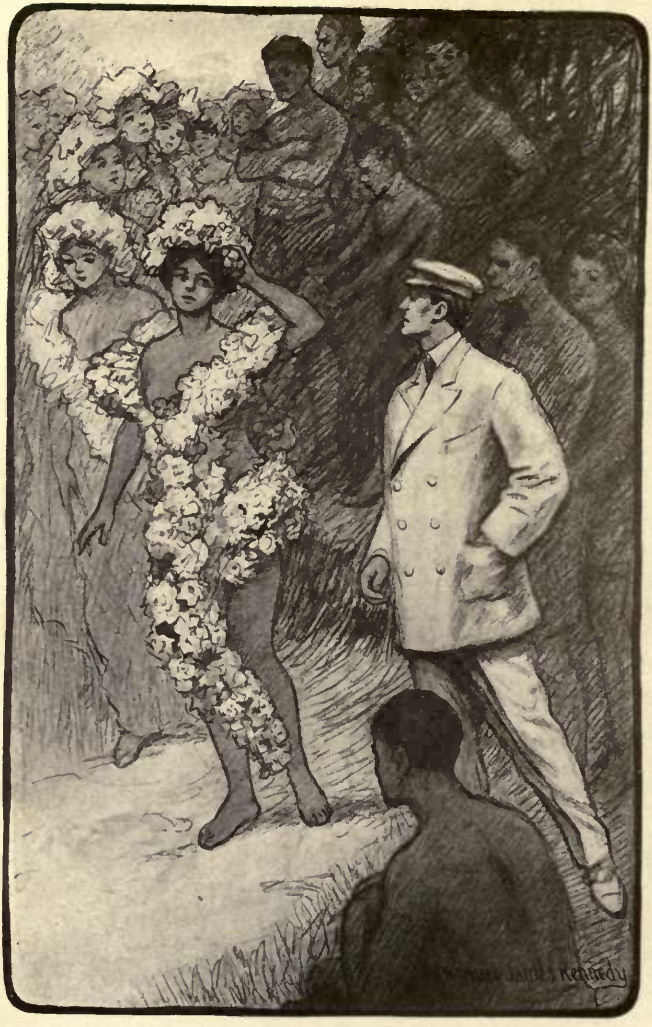
Now, John Thompson had entertained certain ideas regarding agricultural speculation in the Samoan Islands, and had imported for experimental purposes various small quantities of assorted delicate fertilizers—powdered bone and ammonia, or something of that sort. Here was material, and inspiration for action comes to a man sometimes in a way which makes it seem to him as if all the ancient gods were behind him and beside him, aiding him in every way. This sublimity of inspiration came to John Thompson at this moment.

This is how the man, thus sublimated, reasoned: "All the other girls must, necessarily, as in the past, wear cut flowers, which must, to an extent, wither before the judgment of the Wise Ones is declared. I will make a real, living garden of my darling's head, a garden in which shall bloom, not only flowers of the islands here, but of Europe and America, and all countries of the world. Above one of her dark eyes shall dangle such a bunch of glowing and living pansies as the Islanders have never seen; the phlox shall lift itself aloft from her coronet; sweet peas and old-fashioned pinks shall adorn one side of her shapely head, while the other side will be blazing with tossing poppies. She shall appear among the contestants with such a crest as never a queen has worn, though the jewelers of all ages have struggled to make a surpassing crown."

And the man did his work. "Eh," he said, as he patted the matted mass of dusky hair, "talk about farms in the States! Here is an area of the right kind for the support of a family! Talk about landscape gardening! I'll show them what real landscape gardening is!"

He did.

He planted right and left with ardor and good



"THE AWARD COULD BUT GO TO UNA LOA"

judgment, for he was not only an enthusiast but had the artist's gift. Una Loa yielded because she had the trust which every girl should have in a real lover of good character. As Thompson sowed and sowed, she submitted with all hopefulness and slept each night with her neck upon a little log, that each flower plant might grow without abrasion or disturbance. She saw but little of her kin, save a sister who stayed beside her, for Thompson was arrogant—said he was making a botanical experiment—and allowed none to visit her.

The day of the contest came, as the world went round and round. At the appointed hour, all the Samoan maidens appeared together, each with her head in the halo and glory of fair flowers. But there was no contest. Una Loa stood among them all like a bright spirit from somewhere. The fragrance from the flowers upon her head sapped itself into the senses of all who were near her, and there was a glittering, a very splendor of brilliant, multicolored and flaming humming-birds about her queenly head. There was no discussion among the judges. The award could but go to Una Loa, and so it went!

They say that there is a laziness, which is not, after all, a laziness, begotten in those who dwell among the islands in the Southern Seas. It is but adaptation, possibly most sensible. Thompson has resigned from the Weather Bureau and married Una Loa. He is keeping a cigar-store in South Apia and is doing tolerably well.

And the listeners agreed that the Lieutenant had at least looked upon a romance as genuine as simple.

CHAPTER XVI

A WOMAN AND SHEEP

None had acquired a more general regard among the passengers than the Kansas Farmer. He bore no resemblance to the typical farmer as represented in the comic publications but was, on the contrary, a well-dressed, imposing looking man of middle age, a college graduate, as Stafford knew, and one who had selected his occupation because it appealed to him as, to their own and general good, it might appeal to hosts of others of the educated men of the country. Stafford and he had become friends, as was almost a matter of course, and it was the former who insisted that the Farmer bring to the front some curious experience of human nature in connection with farm life. "You are the tree we must tap now," he jested. "It's just because you are what you are that we want the thing. Inevitably, you, with your experience and associations, can tell us something of the inner being and its ways on a farm which will be edifying. Tell us the queerest and most unexplainable thing you remember in connection with such life and of one man or woman's part in it."

The farmer stroked his grizzled, close-cut beard and laughed:

"It seems to me that the element of love has entered with tolerable regularity into most of the narratives to which I have had the pleasure of listening here. That is right, certainly, and natural. What I'm going to tell is a love story, too, in its way. It is of a love which budded and bloomed but bore no fruit, for the oddest reason in the world. It is about a man who loved a woman and was won away by sheep. No, he wasn't exactly won away; he just forgot. It was the strangest thing I ever knew or heard of, but it is true. I know the man and his sheep myself, though I never saw the woman. This is

JASON'S LOVE STORY

A swamp oak stump is one of the most contumacious stumps in the world. It is usually big and its roots extend, like the arms of an octopus, in all directions save upward. Furthermore, having been bred to the wet, feeding on dampness when alive, the wood does not rot willingly. The upper portion of the stump absorbs the showers of heaven and endures the cracking heat of the sun apathetically and remains pretty much the same for a long time, while the roots lie solid in their dark bed, almost regardless of the years as men grow old. So it is that an otherwise cleared area of land occupied largely by swamp oak stumps is what the farmers in Michigan's Lower Peninsula call an unpromising place for present making of crops. It was such an area that Jason Goodell—who was in love—owned. He possessed eighty acres, an eighth of a section, with fifteen acres cleared—but for stumps. The young woman whom he loved was Melissa Trumbull, the eldest daughter of "old man" Trumbull, who was well-to-do.

The place where swamp oaks grow is of a sort to command respect. It has features. It is often a black ash swale. A swale is low ground, but not a swamp, crossed sometimes, at irregular intervals, by strips of higher ground referred to generally as beech ridges. In the lower ground thrive the black ash, the huge swamp oak, various moisture-loving bushes and luxurious growths of ferns. Up on the ridges grow the maple, the white ash, the beech, ironwood and birch and bushes which do not object to less damp soil, nannyberries elders and the like.

In the swale proper the growth underfoot is bush and there are hundreds of puddles where the frogs congregate in thousands, mostly the small, brown wood frog, not the big, green "kerplunk" sort of the ponds and streams. Here the raccoon finds what is, to him, a land flowing with milk and honey, for he agrees with a frog diet as a frog diet agrees with him; here upon dead white trunks the solitary log-cock, the great black, red-crested wood-pecker, largest of his genus, in the region, hammers away like a blacksmith; here the hermit thrush sings sometimes; and here little streams are born, to trickle at first, then ripple and then leap, bubbling and noisy, into the sloping fields outside, to attain the dignity of brooks at last and join the undercreek.

On the beech ridges life is different. There the ruffed grouse struts about and feeds upon the nuts and berries; and there are the squirrels, black, gray and red. The grouse raise great families on the ridges and the wooing "drumming" of the males in spring is like nothing else in the world. It is the most distinctively wildwood sound there is. As for the squirrels, the black is no longer holding his own with the red and the gray. He is going like the Red Indian and the buffalo and no one can tell why. He was not born to civilization. The red and gray adapt themselves. Of such swale and ridge, so peopled, consisted (as has been said) the greater portion of the estate of Jason Goodell; excellent land but requiring much work in its subjugation.

Never better man for conquering a forest or making good soil yield the crops it has owed than this same brown-bearded Jason Goodell. Personally strong, six full feet in height, though a trifle stooping, and slouchy in his gait, thewed like a draft-horse, broad of forehead and strong of chin, with firm mouth and steady gray eyes, this man was one to accomplish things as thoroughly and doggedly as Victor Hugo's Gilliatt toiling sturdily at the wrecked ship. Like Gilliatt, too, Jason was toiling for love's sake. He had never spoken of his passion to Melissa Trumbull, but they had studied together in the little district school, had grown up together, had confided their plans and hopes to each other and, until Jason left the employ of old man Trumbull and began work on his own "eighty," had been almost constantly together. To Jason, reticent, and timid as well, in a matter of this sort, it never occurred to make a definite engagement, and to Melissa, black-eyed, gingham-clad, buoyant and with plenty of work to do, the situation doubtless presented itself with the same aspect. No pledged word, though could have made the matter more fixed and serious than it was, at least to Jason. What need of words? The first thing to do was to make a home for the occupancy of two young married people.

So Jason built a rude cabin and lived in it alone and began clearing his land. At the end of the second year he had fifteen acres in crops of grass and grain, and the beginning of a herd of cattle and a drove of hogs, and was counted by his neighbors as a young man who would be well off some day. They were right in their conclusion Jason was the one to succeed as a farmer. Living simply, working untiringly, the accomplishments of the isolated man were a surprise even to the rugged farmers who knew him well. At the end of the third year a new field had been hewed into the forest and the land first cleared had become more easily tillable. Fire had fed on the stumps. Half a dozen cows were feeding on the grassland, the hogs were fattening on last year's corn crop and chickens and turkeys cackled and called about the rough log-barn. Butter and pork and eggs had a value at the nearest little town, and Jason had saved money. He bought another eighty acres of woodland—land was cheap then—and began to plan the building of a house. There was Melissa!

No log house should this mansion be but one fit for a bride's reception. It should be a framed house, with all proper rooms, clapboarded as to the sides and shingled as to the roof. There should be a porch in front and the building should be of two stories. Jason brooded fondly over it all and planned and dreamed. He consulted often with Jim Rubens, the farmer carpenter of the locality: "Never saw a man so wrapped up in his house-buildin' in all my life!" said Rubens.

The beams and plates and joists and rafters for the house were planned and, with axe and broad-axe and saw, Jason and Rubens labored in the forest until oak and pine were cut and hewed, true to the line, and were then dragged by toiling oxen to the site of the house of which they were to be the stay and strength. The farmers round about assembled for the raising, there were heavings and shoutings, the parts were reared under the hoarse overseeing of Carpenter Rubens and the great timbers, tongue in socket, pinned lastingly together, stood aloft, the sturdy white outline of a pleasant home to face the roadway. What days they were for Jason as the two men labored afterward for weeks until the house stood all complete from cellar to roof-peak, and even painted—white, with green blinds, of course. Furnished it was too, well furnished for the country. It was the finest house in the neighborhood and Jason walked through the rooms with that feeling which comes to a man of purpose when he looks upon the thing accomplished. Not yet, though, was the place ready for Melissa. There was much to be done besides the mere building of a shelter, but, even now, the front part of it must be sacred for her. There Jason nailed up the door solidly.

What comfort could a farmer's wife have with merely a house to live in! Here must be all convenience for her out-door work in connection with the household and all should be pleasant to look upon. Jason settled down resolutely to what was yet to come

Obviously the old log barn had outlasted its original purposes. Its small stable no longer afforded shelter enough for the increasing herd of cattle and the horses nor its mows room for the hay and grain. There must be a frame barn, a big one, with high, wide doors into which a team with a load might be driven and with long stables and mows and roof room enough for all contingencies of harvest. The year after the completion of the house, the barn was built and the one of logs abandoned. But the barn had not absorbed Jason's thoughts so fully as had the house.

The lonely toiling of the man was not lonely to him. He was strong and rejoiced in work, and there was ever Melissa and always something to be done for her. From the front door of the house down to the roadway he made a wide gravelled path and along its sides he made beds of old-fashioned pinks and sowed and planted larkspur and phlox and dahlias and peonies and golden coreopsis and bachelor's buttons and other flowers named in the circulars of a seed firm in the distant city. He made a neat picket gate in the fence where the walk opened on the roadway and beside the fence he had holly-hocks, and sunflowers, the latter trying every day to see Melissa, and turning their heads resolutely from sunrise until evening and going to sleep every night with their faces toward her home, which was in the West. Close beside the house he planted rosebushes and "old hen and chickens" and lady-slippers and morning-glories, and a madeira vine for the porch. There was a path from the front around the house to the kitchen—which had a porch as well—and beside this path Jason had planted an abundance of sweet briar, thinking as he did so how its faint, sweet fragrance and fair blossoms would match Melissa. A hop-vine clambered up the kitchen porch. Jason was thirty years old, now, and Melissa twenty-five.

One day old man Trumbull, who was a great trader, suddenly disposed of his farm and moved into the adjacent county. Somehow, the news did not have much effect on Jason Goodell. It would be as easy to bring her from thirty miles away as from where she had lived, he reasoned. The only difference to come would be that he would not see her often in the interval. There had never been any correspondence between them and it did not occur to Jason to write now.

There came a hard winter, the horses and cattle and other stock required close attendance, and Jason was much about the house. It was at this time when he discovered the faults of the kitchen floor, which was of pine. The boards had shrunk and there were cracks and the soft wood had worn away under the tread of his heavy feet. That sort of kitchen floor would never do for Melissa! He made a new floor and was happy at his labor all through "the big snow." The floor was of hard, seasoned ash, matched perfectly and smooth as the floor of a ball-room. "It will be easier to mop" said he, and thought of Melissa's sunbonnet, and of how it would look hanging against the whitewashed wall.

All winter in Jason's newer eighty acres the axes of two men had swung hardily and, with spring and early summer, came to Jason a stress of effort in helping at the clearing and in attendance on the crops. He had little time for work about the garden, though it was not neglected, but he felt that he must somewhat change his home life. He had lived in the kitchen and a little room adjoining it. He had, from the time the house was built, never changed in the feeling that the front part of the house was sacred to Melissa, but he felt that now a little change must come. His duties were increasing. He must have a hired man about him, one who would live with him. So the hired man came and slept in the room Jason had occupied while Jason slept upstairs in what, in fancy, he had called "our room." "She won't mind," he thought.

There is spur to effort for the real farmer and a great comforting pride in looking out upon a conquered province, to note the corn swaying full-eared, the timothy and clover and grain fields changing color with the shift of the clouds and sweep of the breeze, the lowing cattle in the pastures and the general promise of Autumn's wealth. Jason enjoyed it all, for was it not the product of his design and energy, and as the farm grew, he grew with it. Success fairly earned made him zealous for more. He broadened and was for trying things.

One day old Rubens came along, and leaning idly over the front fence, began a farmer's chat with Jason, who was digging among the flowers. Rubens looked away at the vacant log barn.

"What are you going to do with the old barn?" he asked, "tool-house?"

"No," said Jason, "I have a tool-room in the big barn. I don't know what I'll do with the old one. Pull it down, maybe."

Rubens gazed meditatively at the abandoned but still sound structure: "It would make a mighty good sheep barn," he suggested.

No more was said at the time, but Ruben's idea was not forgotten. It remained in Jason's mind and the more he thought upon it the more he became impressed. Jason had never raised sheep, successful as he had been with other animals. He considered, and rightly, that most of his land was too low for them. There was an eighty acres of woodland adjoining that which he had latest bought that was hilly, not heavily timbered and with many springs and brooks. Partly cleared, with what woods were left well under-brushed, it would make a perfect sheep pasture. He had half a mind to buy it and experiment. And the plan grew in his mind until it overmastered him and he bought the land.

Not the sort of man to venture upon a new venture carelessly was Jason, and he had a problem before him now: What sort of sheep should he raise? His cattle and hogs were of good breeds and to have seen to it that it was so he had found profitable. With sheep he was less acquainted. He asked advice. "Get Merinos, by all means," pronounced Henry Wilson, who lived to the north of him. "Get Southdowns and nothing else," said James Remington, who lived to the west. "I'll get twenty of each and experiment with them separately," decided Jason.

Now as between the Merino and the Southdown sheep there is a great gulf fixed. The Merino is small with gnarled horns, wrinkled neck and nose; with silk-like wool curling close to the skin in its fineness, yellow underneath because of its oiliness, and dark outside because of the dust gathered and held by such close, sticky coat. Well tried is the endurance of the sheep-washer who, in late spring before shearing time, stands waist deep in some stream and seeks to cleanse the fleece of a flock of shivering Merinos driven bleating to the water, and dreading it like a tramp. But the fine Merino wool commands a price; the fleece is heavy and the breeder profits from that, not from the mutton. The flesh of the Merino requires for its consumption people who have been long besieged and who are hungry.

Different is the quality of the Southdown; not from Spanish ancestors, feeding on Andalusian hills, as came the Merino, did he come, but from Anglo-Saxon forefathers who cropped the herbage of the Hampshire and Sussex downs Big and white of body and dark-faced, sturdy of build and garbed in clean, not over fine white wool, hornless but stepping free and high, the Southdown has a healthy individuality. As concerns his mutton, those who know how to eat, and what to eat, speak fluently while their eyes glisten.

And almost as the flocks throve under Isaac, toiling for Rebecca, throve the flocks of Jason, toiling for Melissa. In summer and autumn they fed in the new pasture land and in winter they were sheltered and fared well in the old barn, now renovated and with a great shed attached for further room. Jason became absorbed in sheep-growing, as he had never been before in the growing of anything. He read books on the subject and tried experiments. At the end of the third year, with good flocks now his he selected from each the finest ram and ewe and entered them at the County fair. He wanted to learn with which breed he had been most successful.

Canny and just are almost always the judges at an American County fair. Known personally throughout the region, selected for their uprightness and knowledge of special beast or fowl or any product of the fields, their verdict is almost mechanically accepted as a final and just one. More and more interested became

Jason regarding the issue of his experiments in thus entering into competition with breeders, some of whom had raised sheep before he was born, and he puzzled himself much over the problem of where, in the opinion of these unbiased experts, he would prove to have done best. The decision, when it came, was hardly a surprise to him. His Merinos, it is true, received favorable mention, but his Southdowns took first prize in a field where there was decided and worthy competition. A proud man was Jason Goodell when he saw the blue ribbons tied by a gray-bearded giant in jeans about the necks of his two entries. He made an instant resolution. "I'll not raise wool," he said, "I'll leave that to the Ohioans of the Western Reserve. I'll raise mutton!"

He sold the prize-winners for a mighty price and returned to his farm. Within a week the flock of Merinos was sold, as well, and the money so received was invested in an importation of more Southdowns, with blood as blue as that of the Hapsburgs, and far stronger. Then began sheep-raising that was sheep-raising.

It is hard to serve two masters and it must be admitted that, since his thoughts and plans had turned so absorbingly to Southdowns, Jason felt less surpassingly the inspiration of Melissa. There had been a time when he dreamed of her almost nightly, but, now, his sleeping visions were of great flocks upon the hillsides and the eyes into which he looked were not always the sparkling ones of Melissa, but it might be the soft, gentle eyes of quite another color of some great ewe. Dreams are grotesque things.

Still, instinctively, sometimes fervently, Jason worked and devised for the girl who had gone away. The big orchard back of the house and barns, now growing into fruitfulness, he cared for well. In the spring, feeding the just-weaned calves, as he put his fingers in the mouth of some vigorous youngster and then thrust its muzzle into the milk, that it might learn to drink, he thought as the calf butted joyously at the pail as if it were his own mother, how Melissa would like the calves and how much better than he she would attend to them! He was somewhat troubled, too, because the spring in the hollow was not nearer the house—he did not want Melissa to carry water so many yards—but he planned a "spring-house" with a cement floor, where Melissa should keep the milk and make the butter. That would be less labor for her. There would not be much butter-making anyhow

He was not going to have butter and eggs to sell. Only enough cattle and horses and hogs and chickens for farm purposes did he intend to keep. And he bought yet another eighty acres of land.

It is wonderful how some over-mastering aim, one the accomplishment of which requires concentration of thought and exertion of all energy in one direction, will get its grip upon a man and hold it to the end. With high and low it is the same. Mozart died with the score of the Requiem Mass hardly dry from his feeble hand. Napoleon died with the word of command upon his lips. Seekers, investigators, experimenters in all fields, great and small, have grown into a forgetfulness of aught save one object, have abandoned all outside, and have dreamed and devised and labored toward one absorbing end. Such compelling influence in life may come to the farmer as to others. With Jason, who recognized a farmer's dignity, who knew that the farmer often fought men's battles and at all times fed them, the attainment of his own ambition was nothing small. He became almost a monomaniac over Southdowns. How they thrived!—for Nature ever loves a mentor. Peas grew where oats had grown, clover where was

"THE CHILDREN CARRIED AWAY ARMFULS OF BLOSSOMS" before a cornfield, turnips where had been potatoes, for sheep must eat in winter. It became a Southdown farm, and acres were yet added, for the undertaking was most profitable—until the time came when Jason's keen eyes could not, as he stood looking from the barn door, reach more than vaguely the outlines of his own domain. One day, a girl wearing a sunbonnet matching exactly in shape and color the one Melissa had once worn, passed by and Jason's thoughts went back. That afternoon he took horses and wagon and drove to the growing town. He returned with a piano. "Melissa may have learned to play," he said to himself, "and she will be glad to find it here." But, for weeks, perhaps for months afterward, no Melissa came again into his waking dreams nor in his sleep.

He had abundance of help about him now. Another hired man, accompanied by his wife, had been brought into the house, the wife proving a notable housekeeper and relieving Jason of all petty duties. He visited his neighbors and was liked among them. The children especially were fond of him and he allowed them to visit his house at will and to carry away armfuls of blossoms from his great flower-garden, seeing to it only that they did not harm the plants. But the parlor, with its furniture still unworn, though becoming somewhat old-fashioned now, and with its piano still untouched, was never entered except for dusting, and the front door was never opened.

Far and wide as the great breeder of Southdown sheep, became known the name of Jason Goodell, and his flocks and barns grew with acres steadily. One afternoon a traveling nurseryman came to see him upon business and stayed to dinner. They chatted over the meal:

"I was over at Wishtigo last week," said the man; "drove over one day and came back the next. Who d'ye think I met?"

"Couldn't guess."

"I met County Clerk Jim Lacey's wife—her that used to be Melissa Trumbull, you know. It was the first I knew of it. I took dinner with 'em; she wouldn't allow anything else. They've been married seven years and they've got a mighty nice little family: three children. Jim's a good fellow."

Jason said nothing for a few moments. Then he assented deliberately: "Yes, Jim's a good fellow. I've met him often. I didn't know whether he was married or not, though. What was it you said about them young pear trees? I may take a dozen or two of 'em."

In the middle of the forenoon a few days later, while Jason was looking over the sheep barns and giving directions to the men at work there, a sudden fancy came upon him. He went to the house, asked for a hammer and withdrew the nails from the front door. Then he opened all the parlor windows and let in the sunlight. "It'll be healthier," he explained to the astonished and delighted housekeeper. "Keep them open as much as you want to now, in pleasant weather, and let the children in, too, if they like it. It'll brighten things up."

At a table in one of the fine restaurants in the big city sat, recently, at dinner a man and woman, he a man of the world, she charming as women so often are. They were delighted with the wonderful mutton they had just eaten and were talking of it.

"It's a mutton only kings would be allowed to eat, if these were ancient times," the man asserted laughingly. "It's delicate as strawberries, though that isn't a good comparison. It may have come direct from the Goodell fields."

"Who is Goodell?" queried the lady.

"Goodell, my dear madam, is a public benefactor. He is one of the wisest raisers of Southdown sheep the country knows. He's a splendid old fellow, too. I've visited his farm and met him. He's awfully fond of children."

CHAPTER XVII

THE ENCHANTED COW

For some reason, not altogether clear, there was no comment for a time after the Farmer had finished his account of the affair of Jason and the girl and the Southdown sheep. Perhaps it was because of the grotesqueness of the idea that a man working so faithfully for and so dreaming of his love—a practical man—could have left absolute possession of her to the unreal, while making his hobby at hand the real. The silence was broken by the Young Lady:

"That is very strange life history, it seems to me. How could any man, a real man, forget the girl he cared for in such a way? It seems all wicked and unnatural."

"But, my dear young lady," explained the Professor, banteringly ponderous, "he did not forget her. In fact, from the account he appears to have been a most devoted lover. What he forgot was time. Besides," he continued, "taking the broader point of view, how much better it is for all of us that, in one region at least, we have better mutton than that Jason should have raised a family!"

"Bother the mutton!" was the indignant and somewhat irreverent answer, and then the Colonel intervened:

"My dear Miss," he explained ingratiatingly, "I am confident that it is neither the Professor's lack of heart nor sympathy nor gallantry that has spoken, but, instead, his superior and appreciative judgment in the matter of mutton. It may be that he is braver than some of us. However, it doesn't matter, because your sensibilities are going to be soothed and fed on caramels just now. I am most confident of that, since I am about to commandeer the Poet. Mr. Poet, there is no alternative."

There is something anomalous about the successful modern poets. They are usually disguised as citizens. They do not have shaven faces and long hair and another world expression upon their countenances. Sometimes they have even a stubby mustache and a bad look. This particular poet chanced to be good-looking, but that proves nothing. He responded easily enough:

"Vocalism is difficult to me. I'd rather write this out. I can tell you a story, though, of the region where, it is said, were sowed the Dragon's Teeth from which sprang the men who later owned the Eastern Hemisphere. The story of the Enchanted Cow has the merit that it is true."

THE ENCHANTED COW

It is odd how often when from some legendary source a fairy story comes, we find fact mixed with the fancy. This tale, for instance, might just as well be called "Single Hoof and Double Hoof" or the "Wild Ride for Caviare," as to be named "The Enchanted Cow." Certainly every one should know about caviare, and why some beasts have split hoofs and some round, unyielding ones, but that enchantment should have anything to do with it is curious.

Into the Danube far southwest of Buda-Pesth once ran a deep, still stream which babbled when it began in the hills, became more quiet as it reached the plain, and was almost sluggish when it entered the Black Tarn, as the broad sheet of water was called, though it was in fact a lake surrounded by sedgy marshes. The stream after feeding and passing through the Black Tarn became a deep river, and broadened as it poured itself into the Danube, the father of waters of all the region. To the north of the

Black Tarn was the Moated Grange where lived the Lady Floretta Beamish, that is the lady whose name would have been that if translated into English, for the country in which she lived was Hungary. The streams which would, in English, have been called Ken Water after flowing through the Black Tarn as told, went on through the estate of Sir Gladys Rhinestone. It is true that Gladys is usually accepted as the name of a gentlewoman, but this time it belonged to a gentleman, and one of high degree. He explained his name himself by frankly confessing that he had been named after his mother.

In the days referred to people of the class of the Lady Floretta Beamish and Sir Gladys Rhinestone were generally under the immediate sovereignty of a prince, and the prince in their case was scarce a model. The one to whom all of that part of Hungary owed allegiance was Prince Rugbauer, and he was hardly of a type to be called gentle or considerate. In fact none of the people of the lands about were accustomed to pronounce the name of Prince Rugbauer above a whisper. Whenever it became necessary to allude to the prince, the inhabitants of the country were used to make the motion, hand on throat, of strangling. This was a direct allusion to the prince's system of taxation, and was understood by the humblest knave in the whole valley of Ken Water. Even the prince knew the meaning of this gesture, though when first told of it he but laughed grimly and no one ever spoke to him again about it. It was the witch of Zombor who told the prince. Anything malicious might be expected from her.

It was because of the witch that the cow was in trouble. The witch had enchanted the cow for a thousand years, and the seven hundredth year was passing when this tale begins. It may be said straightforwardly of the witch, that she was one of the worst of a disagreeable class of beings now, happily, becoming rare. She lived in a sort of hutch, a round mud-walled den on a hill which would be called Endbury Moon in English, and throughout the day she lay curled up in this den like a snail in its shell, but at night she came out regularly to work such mischief as she might in the country round about. Wherever she found there was no trouble she proceeded at once to brew some. There was no end to her pernicious activity.

The Lady Floretta Beamish was an orphan and sole mistress of the two-towered Grange and all the lands and waters a mile either up and down the deep Ken Water. But the land was far from rich, and the revenues of the lady came mostly from the sturgeon in the river which were caught each year in the same manner as in the Danube itself. The Lady Floretta was a very beautiful creature. Her hair was of a pale golden hue, and her eyes were blue. Her cheeks were like June roses. She was tall and fair, and walked around the walled Grange in a long white satin robe embroidered with gold, and down her back rippled the golden hair, even to the hem of her trailing gown.

It required the services of seven maidens and seven hours daily to comb and brush the Lady Floretta's hair, but they did not mind it. The seven maids had nothing else to do, so they combed and they combed, and they brushed and they smoothed the pale golden treasure of their mistress' hair, fastening each shining braid of it at last to the hem of her trailing gown, with pins sparkling with diamonds, moonstones, rubies and emeralds. Why the Lady Floretta did not dispose of some of these jewels when the strait came, which will be told of, it is not easy to understand. It may be they were all heirlooms and so not to be parted with.

A year of trial came at last for both the Lady Floretta and Sir Gladys Rhinestone. No fish were caught and that was a disaster which affected everything. The fish were the fortune of the country, for from the eggs of the great sturgeon was made the caviare, without which no true-born noble of the realm could make a tolerable meal. The caviare was shipped away to all parts of the civilized world as it is now, and it will be seen that to have the stream fail of fish was a calamity of first magnitude.

It was a wonderful thing to see the manner of fishing in those days, and they fish in the same way upon the Danube now. They cut a great gap through the ice in the winter, the gap extending across the stream, and in it they set monster nets. Then, miles above the nets, a band of horsemen ranged themselves straight across the river on the ice, which would bear an army, and at a signal blast come thundering down at utmost speed. The noise was terrific. "Ohe! ohe! a hun! a hun!" yelled the wild horsemen, there was a blare of trumpets and the strong ice trembled beneath the impact of the mighty hoofs. The timid sturgeon fled beneath the ice before the pursuing shock, and at last rushed blindly into the awaiting nets, to be taken by thousands and tens of thousands. But from Ken Water, though the horsemen rode as in the past, no fish were found. The stewards explained that the stream had run very low, and that the fish had gone either to the Danube or the depths of the Black Tarn. The case was very bad. Prince Rugbauer announced that Sir Gladys and Lady Floretta were false traitors both, and announced as well that he would cancel their ownership of their lands and castles, and hold them no better than common folk themselves unless the heavy annual taxes were paid within a week.

And so it came to pass one night that from his castle Sir Gladys paced with bowed head along Ken Water, around the Black Tarn toward the witch's hut on Endbury Moor, and at the same time, the moon over her right shoulder, came to the desolate hill-top Lady Floretta, each bent on consulting the Witch as to what should be done about the fish that had left Ken Water.

The Witch, seated on top of her hut, gave what is called in old stories, an eldritch laugh when she saw Sir Gladys advancing on one side of the Moor, and Lady Floretta, more slowly climbing up the other.

When the Lady Floretta heard the strange laugh of the Witch, she was startled and alarmed and stood still for the space of a full half-hour, while her seven maidens coaxed her to go on, and so Sir Gladys, who was less affected by the eldritch laugh than she and who, moreover, was alone, arrived first at the Witch's haunt and secured audience at once. He gave the Witch a gold-plated candlestick and two sugar spoons of silver, then explained his woeful plight, and asked advice and counsel.

The Witch clutched the articles eagerly in her claw-hands, climbed down from the little hut, and standing in her low door croaked out:

"By the light of yonder moon,
Look and see your fortune soon!"

She thrust the candlestick and sugar spoons into a bag at her girdle, and, curling up within her hut, fell fast asleep without ceremony, leaving Sir Gladys peering doubtfully in at the door which she had left open. What she had said was certainly vague and unsatisfactory and he felt that he had been imposed upon. He tried in vain to arouse the creature and tiring at last of shouting into the hut at a figure apparently of stone, he turned away but to meet, fair and full, the beautiful Lady Floretta Beamish attended by the seven maidens carrying seven lighted horn lanterns, and followed by a gentle snow-white cow with golden horns and hoofs.

Sir Gladys swept the heather with his plumed hat, as he bowed before the Lady Floretta.

"Madam," he said, with deep respect, "upon what quest do you come upon this lonely moor by the uncertain light of the moon feebly aided by the seven lanterns carried by your maidens?"

The Lady Floretta could not speak. Her embarassment and confusion were such that she could scarcely stand even when supported by her maidens. She looked around for a chair.

Sir Gladys took from his shoulders his cloak of purple velvet, and spread it at the lady's feet. "Rest," he said, "rest, and recover your strength, fair and honored Lady! I will await your pleasure, meanwhile examining the unusual specimen of the animal kingdom which I see following your gracious footsteps."

He took a step or two toward the Enchanted Cow—for it was she—but she shook her golden horns, and he remained standing near the Lady Floretta, who sat down, affably and quite comfortably, upon the cloak of purple.

"Hark to the thunder!" said the Lady Floretta. "It is going to rain!" and she began to chide the maids for not bringing umbrellas. Each it is true had a small parasol to ward off moon-stroke, but there was not one umbrella worthy of the name among them all.

"It is not thunder that you hear, sweet lady," said Sir Gladys. "'Tis but the stertorous and unseemly breathing of the foul Witch in the den."

"Oh, is she asleep? And no one dares awaken her!" sighed the Lady Floretta. "I have walked a weary distance to consult her," she explained, as she became convinced that the sounds she had heard indeed came from the Witch's hut.

Sir Gladys came nearer, the seven maidens drew nearer, the Enchanted Cow herself walked closer to Lady Floretta, as she sat upon the cloak spread upon the heather, and there in the summer night the Lady Floretta and Sir Gladys exchanged confidences and condolences about their sore strait, and often made the dread gesture as they talked, for neither thought best to name the Prince Rugbauer and both were too well-bred to whisper in company.

The seven maidens sitting there on the heather, fell asleep, each nodding over her horn lantern. The Enchanted Cow, however was wide awake, and, from her expression, appeared to sympathize deeply with the two distressed mortals whose troubles were so freely poured forth in her presence. They spoke of the disastrous happening of the winter, and of the probable hopelessness of an attempt to retrieve their fortunes at this time of the year.

"The outlook is black indeed," remarked Sir Gladys, and the Lady Floretta agreed with him dejectedly.

"It is the Split Hoof that you need," said a soft deep voice; and the two turning their heads saw the Enchanted Cow looking upon them earnestly. It was she who had spoken.

Sir Gladys and Lady Floretta were dumb with astonishment. After a brief silence, the Enchanted Cow continued: "Last winter when you rode furiously upon the frozen stream the thunder of your horses' hoofs scared no fish into your nets, and when spring came the water was as low as it had been the summer before and is still shallow. But I know where the fish are hidden and that they have not spawned. I stand, during the heat of these summer days, knee deep in the water in the shallows of the Black Tarn, and I see what I see."

"Dear Enchanted Cow," said the Lady Floretta, "please tell us what you see!"

"This one night in the year," resumed the Enchanted Cow, without appearing to notice what the Lady Floretta has said, "this one night in the year, and the only one night in the year, yonder crafty Witch must sleep. She cannot awaken until midnight and this is the one night in the year that the Witch's spell is lifted from me, and I am given the power of speech until the clock strikes twelve."

"Oh! however can you stand it to be dumb so much of the time?" exclaimed the pitying Lady Floretta.

The Enchanted Cow looked at the Lady in surprise, for it is a great and beneficent thing to a cow to be allowed to speak at all.

"It is getting late," said Sir Gladys, looking at his watch by the light of one of the lanterns, and then, addressing the White Cow: "You were making an interesting observation concerning fish in the Black Tarn, if I mistake not."

"The Black Tarn is full of the great fish," the Enchanted Cow declared. "They have taken refuge there, Ken Water being so low. You have but to stretch your nets, draw them, and reap your harvest."

"But, my dear madam," urged Sir Gladys, "the Black Tarn is surrounded by fens and marshes. Our horses were mired in trying to take out boats and nets this spring, when the ice first broke and we thought to fish in the Black Tarn, at a venture."

"As I remarked at the beginning of this conversation," said the White Cow, somewhat testily, "it is the split hoof that you need—"

Just then the distant Church clocks of the Saag could be heard, all striking the hour of twelve.

The White Cow turned at once and walked in the direction of the Black Tarn, and Sir Gladys, the Lady Floretta and the seven maidens, now fully awake, followed, the more speedily because of a screech from the Witch, as she burst from the door, her inevitable yearly nap at an end.

But no word could be heard from the Enchanted Cow. She looked meaningly at Sir Gladys, though, and that gallant gentleman seemed plunged in thought as the little party of wanderers left the white figure standing on the edge of the swampy ground which surrounded the Black Tarn. Sir Gladys escorted the Lady Floretta home, and what the two said to each other as they hurried over the moor toward the Moated Grange is what no one need

"SIR GLADYS ESCORTED THE LADY FLORETTA HOME" consider. They were companions in misfortune, and so drawn closely. Having bowed to the ground at the Great Gate, and having seen it close on the disappearing forms of the lady and her seven maidens, Sir Gladys hied him home, with quickened step. All the while he was thinking deeply. He had been from boyhood a student of natural history.

Away back in the past so dim and distant that only the most learned can talk of it intelligently, away in the time after the earth had risen from the warm waters and when the great reptiles had given place to animals, something like those which exist to-day, the hoofs of all the quadrupeds were split. The land was low and marshy then, and the split hoof best supported its owner on the yielding surface. As the earth protruded more and more, and dry and sometimes rocky land uprose, such beasts as frequented the hills found that their hoofs were changing slowly with the centuries. Hard and round the hoofs became as was best for the hill dwellers, but the beasts of the shores and lowlands retained the split hoof and still can tread the morass. This the Enchanted Cow knew. This, Sir Gladys Rhinestone, who had studied natural history, knew as well.

It was four in the morning by the great clock of the Castle when Sir Gladys stood in the center of the stone-paved courtyard and wound his horn. At the sound every man in the Castle and its surrounding buildings, and on the farms about, became astir, and soon Sir Gladys had his trusty henchmen a dozen deep about him. His words of command sent them scattering in all directions, and sunrise beheld a sturdy band, headed by Sir Gladys, leaving the Castle Gate and turned in the direction of the Black Tarn. With the men marched fifty of the great red oxen of Rhinestone, and upon their mighty shoulders they bore the heavy nets and boats of the once lucky fisherman of Ken Water.

Sir Gladys had taken the White Cow's hint, and set the split hoof to do what the whole hoof could not accomplish.

A messenger was sent to the Moated Grange requesting the Lady Floretta to visit the shore of the Black Tarn, and thither the procession moved and soon the Tarn was reached. Then followed a scene of which the story was told for years, for it was something worth the seeing. The great tractable oxen, encouraged doubtless by the Enchanted Cow who stood knee-deep in the oozy margin awaiting them, bore out bravely into the black waters through reeds and sedge and yielding mud and made a mighty splashing toward the center of the lake where in a semicircle were gathered the fishermen with their boats and nets. The waters near the shore were churned into a foam, and the watchers looking outward could see the long wakes of the frightened sturgeon as they fled to certain capture.

And the nets were filled to the overflowing; so heavy were they that the great oxen could scarcely draw them to firm land. So the great work was accomplished, the Lady Floretta and her maidens coming in time to see it all. There were fish enough to furnish caviare enough it would seem for half the world.

It was well that their two estates joined, for while during the fishing, the Lady Floretta and Sir Gladys had been sitting on the strand of the Black Tarn—Sir Gladys' cloak around the Lady, for the day grew chill—they had declared each to the other their determination to join their lives and their fortunes together from that hour, and so it came to pass that, by the time the fish eggs were turned into caviare and sold and the money was in hand to pay Prince Rugbauer's taxes, Sir Gladys Rhinestone had made the

Lady Floretta Beamish his bride, and what was good or ill fortune for one was the same for the other.

And this is also told, that, as for the Enchanted Cow, ever afterward she wandered at will on the moors in summer, and was well cared for at the castle or the Moated Grange in winter. And ever on the night of the Witch's sleep, the cow was visited in state by fair Sir Gladys and Lady Floretta, for nothing is more excellent than gratitude.

CHAPTER XVIII

LOVE AND A ZULU

Mrs. Livingstone, who had become accepted, by this time, to the Colonel's great delight, as a sort of lovingly hesitant chaperon and hostess of the accidental House Party, was now, doubtless to her own surprise, the one to take the initiative:

"Did I understand you to say, Mr Poet, that what you just related was strictly true?"

"Yes, Madam, certainly," was the calm and unabashed reply of the person addressed.

"Thank you," was the gentle answer, "it was beautiful," and then she turned to her husband, "Colonel, won't you please request one of the stern business men here to tell something, something reliable, and of the present time?"

The Colonel's quizzical eye had, for some moments rested upon the Broker, to the evident disquietude of that gentleman, though it was clear that he would not seek to avoid the issue when his time for effort came. He had not listened to the tale which had been told as intently as he might and there was a look upon his face as of a man recalling memories. He was mentally preparing himself for the Colonel's onslaught—and it came.

"Mr. Broker," said the genial tyrant, "gentlemen of your type in the business world are about the best fellows going, and, as I know, from listening interestedly a thousand times, are always telling good stories, when not going crazy 'on 'change.' Your turn has come and your fate is sealed beyond all peradventure. Sir, we await you."

The Broker "accepted the situation:" "I've been anticipating this emergency and have been preparing for it as much as possible. I don't know that it is what might be called a strictly business story, but it is that of how a friend of mine—an admirable man—made a lot of money and gained one of the prettiest wives in the world. I think we might call it

LOVE AND A ZULU

In every drop of the blue blood of St. Louis there is a bubble of sporting blood. This is a love story of St. Louis, with filaments of fact entwining themselves with the lighter filaments of fancy. The St. Louis lover—of course, there are exceptions—loves with his whole heart, and in his constant heart, with every pulsation, throbs the idea of chance. So, the great city on the banks of the Father of Waters is a city of honorable betting.

John Driscoll was in trouble. John Driscoll, aged twenty-seven, was a lone scion of one of the best families of St. Louis, a city where they have good families, certainly. Driscoll's trouble was of the sort which tries a man. He was desperately in love with a fair young woman, but consent to the marriage was absolutely refused by the young woman's father until Driscoll should be worth at least twenty thousand dollars; and a very obstinate old gentleman was Mr. Cameron, who owned much real estate and was looked upon as one of the solid men of a solid city. It was not altogether a harsh impulse which had brought this decree from him. He wanted Driscoll to show that he had business ability, for Driscoll had been something of a figure socially and not much of a figure otherwise. Mr. Cameron was very fond of his daughter Jessie. John Driscoll had been left, on the death of his mother, with a fortune of only eighteen thousand dollars;

two thousand dollars were already gone and he had earned nothing. In order, therefore, to meet the requirement of his prospective father-in-law, he must, somehow, make four thousand dollars. It may be said to his credit that he lacked neither earnestness nor courage. He devoted himself at once to a vigorous endeavor to gain the required sum. He worked with feverish earnestness. He became solicitor for an insurance company, and, with his wide acquaintance, made a moderate success of the business from the beginning. It was hard to endure—for love is impatient—but the man did not flinch. At the end of a year he had a little over eighteen thousand dollars in bank and admirable prospects. But, as above wisely remarked, love is exceedingly impatient. He was offered a chance in a speculation which promised to gain for him two thousand dollars at once, and yielded to the temptation—though persuaded against it by the girl he loved and who loved him. Instead of gaining two thousand dollars, he lost two thousand, and was back at the sixteen thousand dollar notch again. A year had been wasted.

At the northeast corner of Elm Street and Broadway is a famous place—half restaurant, half summer garden—where theatre parties go, and where the gilded youth of the city eat, drink and are merry. Nonsensical propositions arise among these young gentlemen with money and, in many instances, with brains as well. One evening at one of the tables there arose a discussion over the old problem of whether or not the ordinary man could eat thirty quail in thirty days. The discussion became warm. "It is absurd," said a young man named Graham—"the whole idea of it. Why, after a hard day's shooting in Texas, I once ate six quail at a single meal. That means that even a man of my size can eat thirty quail in five days, doesn't it?"

"Well, it may or may not," was the response of a youth named Malvern, one of the group; "but eating six quail in one day, or thirty quail in six days, is not the matter under discussion. One of the most exquisite forms of torture known to the Chinese, is to bind a prisoner so that he cannot move his head, and then, from a reservoir above, allow drop after drop of water to fall upon his head. At first it is nothing, but, finally, there comes an uncomfortable sensation, then pain, and, in the end, an exquisite agony. The victim dies or goes insane. A barrel of water poured upon him at once would not have affected him at all. So it is with eating thirty quail in thirty days. It is the monotony for all those days—the thing that cannot be avoided—that tells."

"Bah!" said Graham. "I don't take your view of the case. I've the courage of my convictions, and I'll bet you five hundred dollars that I will eat thirty quail in thirty days, breakfasting here at nine o'clock each morning and eating my quail then."

"Done!" was the prompt reply. "You're not the only fellow who has the courage of his convictions. We'll appoint a committee of observation, and breakfast here together regularly. There'll be fun in the thing, whatever the outcome."

The committee was appointed, and the next morning saw a hilarious group seated about the table. Graham was full of confidence and jest. He ordered his quail broiled, and his companions, out of compliment, ordered the same thing. It was a breakfast enjoyed by all. Here follows a summary of what happened on succeeding mornings:

Breakfast Second.—Graham came in, still confident, and had a good appetite, as appeared when he ordered broiled quail again and ate it with much gusto. Of the five men at table two ate quail as well; the others ordered beefsteak.

Breakfast Third.—Graham's serenity was still unruffled. He ate his quail broiled, as usual, and seemed to enjoy it, but he noticed that none of his friends took quail. "I must have variety," said one of them.

Breakfast Fourth. Graham said he must have indulged in too much champagne the night before. He ordered his quail roasted for a change, and ate it slowly—the committee of three watching him like hawks, to see that he picked the bones clean.

Breakfast Fifth.—The events of the meal were almost identical with those of the day before, save that Graham required a little more time in which to consume his bird.

Breakfast Sixth.—Graham declared that, after all, we were behind the English in our manner of cooking birds. They boiled two fowls to our one. He ordered his quail boiled and picked away at it with some energy. He certainly cleaned the bones with more ease than before.

Breakfast Seventh.—Graham came in, looking bilious. He hesitated before ordering, but finally decided that he would take his quail chopped up into stew. There was some debate over this, and the committee finally went into the restaurant kitchen, to see that nothing got away. The stew seemed to please Graham and he made numerous jests at the expense of the men, "who," he said, "had no stomachs."

Breakfast Eighth. Graham ordered quail stew again, but did not get along so well as he had on the previous morning. He declared the bird to be stale and said that it smelled "quailly." As a matter of fact, it was a plump young bird, shot only the day before.

Breakfast Ninth.—To the astonishment of everybody, Graham, who looked more bilious than ever, ordered quail hash. The committee was indignant, but there was no recourse, and so they were compelled to visit the kitchen again and watch the career of the quail from plucking to plate. Graham became furious. He said it was a shame to doubt the honesty of the establishment. He ate the quail.

It is unnecessary to continue in detail the story of the breakfasts in the great restaurant. Each day Graham became more petulant and unreasonable. All ways of cooking quail were at last exhausted, and there was a compelled return to some of those already employed.

Graham by the fifteenth day had become haggard and the very odor of the delicate bird, as it came in, brought to him a feeling of utmost nausea. He was brusque with the faithful waiter, and took no interest in the conversation of his friends. He was plucky, though, and managed, by sheer force of will, to consume the distasteful ration. Meanwhile, the wager had become the comment of the town, especially among the wealthy youth, and thousands of dollars were staked upon the issue. The restaurant was thronged each morning, and the proprietor wished he had some such attraction to such a class throughout all the rotund year. This notoriety but made the case of poor Graham worse; it made him more anxious to succeed, but it unnerved him.

On the twentieth day the odds, which had at first been in favor of Graham, dropped to no odds at all, and on the twenty-second they were against him. He came in with a pallid look upon his face and sat down before his dainty fare. He took up his knife and fork; then suddenly laid them down and left the place. Within ten minutes he returned with a set face and resolutely performed his task. Where he had been was not known at the time, but it was rumored, later, in the Southern Hotel (which was in the same block) that there had been sold a half-pint bottle of champagne that morning to a gentleman in a hurry.

So, worse and worse became the man's condition, greater and greater his abhorrence of what is counted a delicate bit of eating. On the twenty-sixth morning he came in with a more closely hovering look of apprehension than had yet been noticed. He sat down before the bird, picked at it for a moment, rose from the table walked about for a while; then came back, again and again, and considered what was before him. He gasped, and, as he arose to his feet and started from the room, exclaimed huskily: "It's no use, boys. I was mistaken. I can't do it. I give up!"

There was pity for him, especially among the minors, for he had done his best. Many cheques were drawn that morning.

Driscoll always breakfasted at this restaurant and had, naturally, become interested in this droll struggle between man and quail. For a day or two after his own loss he had been dazed and discouraged haunting the lobbies of the Planter's, the Southern or the Lindell, and pitying himself amazingly. All at once he braced up, to an extent, through the influence of plucky little Jessie Cameron. "We must begin again—that's all," said she, resolutely and cheerily. "Surely, you love me as much as Jacob, who served twice seven years, for Rachel, and I admire you more than I do Jacob—though I never liked his device concerning Esau. Begin again, dear, and all will come right."

And Driscoll did begin again with a vigor, though henceforth he referred to Mr. Cameron as Laban to the indignation of the fair and filial Jessie.

The lover settled down to earnest work, did well and was becoming contented and hopeful. This condition of mind enabled him to speculate in his hours of ease upon something outside of his personal affairs. The quail-eating contest had interested him, because he was an educated man, and something of a student of the body. Why had Graham failed in the eating of thirty quail in thirty days? Men eat thirty breakfasts in thirty days and do not know they have done it. Hunters and miners eat bacon alone—that is, as far as their meat goes—for months at a time and think nothing of it. Why had Graham failed?

Just as a matter of amusement, Driscoll tried to study the thing out: "Man is omnivorous," he thought; "not a flesh-eater alone, and his range of consumption is wide. He must have variety, even in flesh, as a requirement of his stomach. Furthermore, man alone, among all creatures, is imaginative, and, when forced to eat a certain thing, develops a thousand fancies against it until it becomes revolting. It might be so, very likely would be so, in the case of the beefsteak or the bacon. The only animal which can live easily and uncomplainingly upon one kind of flesh alone, live cheerfully and healthfully, like the lion or the tiger or others of the carnivora, must be one accustomed to such purely flesh diet and one without imagination." And Driscoll was right in his conclusions.

There existed at this time on Fourth Street, near Walnut, a dime museum of the better sort. Among the attractions for the season were five Zulus from Barnum's Circus—Zulus, most graceful of all savages, with their incurved backs, broad chests, and the step of him of Kipling, who

"Trod the ling
Like a buck in spring."

and who, daily, for the edification of the populace, gave a great exhibition of the throwing of the assegai. One of them was a woman and she could speak English.

"A human being accustomed to a flesh diet and without imagination wouldn't he be a wonder to these joyous bettors?" thought Driscoll. Then he almost gasped as he leaned back. He had dropped into the dime museum on Fourth Street that morning, having business with the proprietor, and had noted the performance of the Zulus admiringly. "A human being living on flesh exclusively and without imagination almost concerning food." Here were a group, all of whom had throughout their lives, until imported, lived, practically, upon flesh alone—the half-cooked flesh of the herds. Flesh alone was what their stomachs craved. Additionally, they had no imagination concerning food—no morbid fancies. They only wanted meat and plenty of it—and the rest be hanged! Driscoll saw it all. He thought for an hour and then there came upon his face the look of a man who is going to break a jam of pine logs in some Northern river or drown beneath the timber. He called at the dime museum.

"Gregory," said he, "I want to borrow your best Zulu."

"*Borrow what?*" said Gregory.

"A Zulu."

"What do you mean? Tell me about it."

"I'll explain. You know all about the quail-eating contest, where Graham failed. You've got a man who won't fail." Then he explained all he had thought out. The museum proprietor—acute man—became excited: "I'll do anything you say," he promised.

The next morning, Driscoll was breakfasting as usual in the swell restaurant with the usual group—Graham, somewhat recovered, among them. They were still talking of the recent eating exploit, when, in the midst of the debate, Driscoll spoke, calmly: "I'll wager that I can produce a man who can eat thirty quail in thirty days. The committee who served in Graham's case shall serve in this. The only thing that I ask is that the eating be done upon the stage in the dime museum near the corner of Fourth and Walnut Streets, and just after we have had breakfast here each morning. I'll provide tickets for all those directly interested in the result."

There arose a clamor. Not a man among

all the gilded young men present believed now that any man could eat thirty quail in thirty days. Driscoll had deliberated and had dared. He had brought with him two thousand dollars of his remaining fortune. He got odds at first of four to one; then three to one; then two to one. He stood to lose two thousand dollars, or win between five and six thousand.

There was among the Zulus a stalwart young man whose assegai sank deepest into the wooden target, who was a model of strength and wild, unknowing lustiness, and who had but lately left his tribe in Southern Africa. Little but flesh had ever passed his mouth as food. He was told, through the English-speaking woman, that there was a little bird—the sweetest in the country—one of which would be given him each morning because he had thrown the assegai so well for the white man's edification. He smacked his lips, strutted and became excited.

Next morning occurred a scene heretofore unknown to the dime museum. In the front seats was the cream of society, so far as young men were concerned, and all the other seats were filled, because the wise proprietor of the place had seen to it that news so important had gone abroad. No theatre in all the town drew such a fashionable audience as did this dime museum. It was a scene most edifying and altogether blithesome and lighthearted, and one having a special interest.

There was not much of a pause. The Zulu, accompanied by the committee, came upon the stage—the gentleman from South Africa with glittering eyes and a look of hungry expectancy upon his face. Then, a moment later, came in a waiter with a quail—roasted whole and temptingly displayed upon a tray. The Zulu gazed at it for a minute; then suddenly picked it up by the legs; thrust the head and breast of the bird into his mouth and crunched savagely. He was delighted. A moment later, he tossed the legs away and looked for more. He had simply chewed the bird and swallowed bones and all!

And so, each day, for twenty-nine days the absurd performance was repeated. It was quite unnecessary to change the style of cooking, though the breast bones were removed by order of the committee, out of a probably unnecessary regard for the digestion of this human personage brought up on meat half raw. He but clamored for more on each occasion and was pacified only through the intervention of the woman who promised that soon he was to have a feast. She was telling him the truth. Driscoll and Gregory had arranged upon a spectacular termination of the contest—a contest which already, as everybody saw, was determined as to its issue. Through the interpreter, the Zulu was informed that on the thirtieth day he was to have, not only the quail, but a large bird—one worthy the appetite of a warrior—a bird known in this strange country as turkey and very good to eat. The strong thrower of the assegai could hardly restrain himself. He was to have a feast at last!

The thirtieth morning came, and the quail disappeared as usual. Then, in a stately procession, came waiters—the first bearing a huge roast turkey. Behind him came others with the American accompaniments to the roast turkey, and all was set before the Zulu. There followed a sight worth seeing. The turkey was utterly demolished; the contents of the side dishes were consumed and the dishes themselves licked to a housewifely cleanness. For the first time in thirty days the Zulu gave a grunt of satisfaction. When all accounts were settled, the fortune of John Driscoll amounted to just twenty-two thousand one hundred and eighty dollars and twenty-seven cents.

And so ended the second of the great quail-eating contests in St. Louis. Perhaps it was wrong, perhaps Driscoll shouldn't have won his money in the way he did; but in St. Louis there remains, as said in the beginning, much of the venturesome but always clean and honorable sporting spirit of the South, and in this case nobody was hurt, to speak of. They could afford it, and all, winners and losers, had enjoyed themselves.

But facing Driscoll were still two appalling situations. There were Jessie and Mr. Cameron. Here the young man conducted himself with a diplomacy which was vastly to his credit. He went to Jessie, threw himself on her mercy and confessed all in detail—confessed everything. She was confused and maybe shocked; but a woman in love is kindly, and a woman in love with a man of force wants to become his wife.

"How will you explain to Father?" said the thoughtful maiden.

"I'll arrange it, somehow," said the now confident and buoyant Driscoll.

He visited Mr. Cameron and gave satisfactory proof to the old gentleman that he was now the possessor of over twenty thousand dollars.

"But how did you gain the money so soon, boy?" said Mr. Cameron. "I heard that you lost a thousand or two."

Driscoll's face sobered. "I should think that no one better than you, Mr. Cameron, would understand the necessity on the part of a business man of keeping secret his methods and the relations of his business affairs. Pardon me—I am not yet your son-in-law."

"Right you are, Driscoll!" was the immediate response. "You're a business man, after all!"

It was not long before Driscoll became the son-in-law in fact. Then he told the whole story to his father-in-law.

"Hum! ha!" said the old gentleman, musingly.

CHAPTER XIX

AT BAY SOFTLY

Stafford had at frequent intervals during the day been in communication with the relief train and had received neither encouragement nor the opposite. There had been a sharp questioning of a new man in charge, a person who seemed to know his business thoroughly, but who was far from voluble in conversation. Evidently the emergency had been thought such as to require the presence of some one of greater versatility than was likely to be possessed by the train crew, but from this new overseer the questioner received but little satisfaction. In fact the boss had seemed not altogether open and candid in his statements and Stafford had become a trifle irritated. He put the case lightly, for the man to whom he was talking was evidently bright:

"I'm not altogether satisfied with your answers. We people imprisoned here have a right to know exactly what the outlook is. Why don't you come to me more like a child to its mother? We are cutting wood for fuel, and the food supply is getting low. What are you doing over there?"

"Are you a railroad man?"

"Well, I've seen a railroad."

"You ought to know what this job is then. It's a pretty tough one."

"I know it, but why don't you answer my questions more definitely? Have you anything up your sleeve?"

"Possibly; my sleeves are pretty big. This I'll tell you, though, that I think we're all right. I'd tell you more if I felt sure myself. We're going to try something. That's all."

Somehow, this elated Stafford. He felt that he had been talking to a man who knew what he was about and he became confident that release was close at hand. But was he elated, after all? Release would mean that there would remain but two more days of Her, for, in such event, within two days the train would be in Chicago. He was in a most uncertain mood.

He was restless and unreasonable. Why to him should come such perplexity in life, such trial to one who had banished himself to avoid temptation? Yet, here it was, thrust in his way again, and he must be once more a Tantalus.

He became mightily impatient as he brooded and wished that he had Fate where he could punish her. Just what he would do with that lady in such contingency he hardly knew. He got to speculating upon that and had all sorts of fancies. He conceived the grotesque idea that the ducking-stool would be about the thing. The association of Fate with the ducking-stool seemed somewhat incongruous, it is true, something in the way of an anachronism, it was such a far cry from Homer to New England, but that didn't matter. She certainly deserved the ducking-stool,—and then he could not but laugh at himself and his vexed fancies. It was a trait of Stafford that, whatever the situation, he was certain in turning it over in his mind, to give it some fantastic sidelight, which diverted his attention, and that generally relieved him. The idea of having Fate in the ducking-stool appealed to him just now and smoothed his mood. How would that arbitrary lady, she who had had her own way with the world so long, conduct herself under such trying circumstances, for trying he inferred they were, from old prints which he had studied with great interest in his childhood. He imagined the way in which her long hair would float out upon the water as the shore end of the board went up and she, in the chair at the other end, went down and under water, and, in imagination, he could hear her gasp a little, stubborn as she is reputed to be. How would she behave and comport herself after the third or fourth dip? Would she prove amenable and, when she had got her breath, pledge herself to be henceforth and for all time a little more considerate of the comfort of humanity? For lovers especially would she exhibit a more kindly and understanding regard? If not, why, then, under she must go again!

So he ambled on foolishly and to his own relief. An admirable thing for Stafford was it that these whimsies so often seized upon him, equally when he was enraged or distressed, it didn't matter which. They helped to tide him over the mental emergency. Happy the man who has such an odd streak in the composition of his under-nature.

"Still," Stafford laughed to himself, "I am an abused man. I am a victim of atrocious circumstances. I'm an injured being, and I'm at bay! I'm going to turn and make the best of it savagely. I'll have, at least, the comfort of looking into a pair of eyes and listening to a voice. I'll go and talk to Her."

And he went into the next car and seated himself beside the Far Away Lady, who received him kindly. He resolved to indulge himself in her companionship for a time, though against his better judgment. He knew that he was but making his trial the harder to bear.

"Do you know," he said, after the first greeting, "that I wish I could sing?"

"And why do you wish that?" she queried.

"Because, if I could, I would get off the train and wade through the snow away out to that clump of evergreens you see there two-thirds of the way up the slope—which would be out of hearing from here—and I would get behind the evergreens, out of sight, and sing something dolorous."

"Why would you do that?"

"I hardly know myself. I suppose it would be something in the mood and the way of the old troubadours, who, when things went wrong, murmurered 'Alack' and sought the silent places and engaged in dismal vocalism."

"But don't you think it was rather foolish of them?" ventured the Far Away Lady.

"I don't know about that. It must have been a sort of relief. Groaning is a great relief when you are hurt. I noticed that particularly among my workmen in Siberia, whenever one of them had been injured in an accident. Very fine groaners they were, too."

"But what nonsense you are talking"—there was a note of more than anxiety in her voice—"has something happened? Tell me, John. Has anything occurred to-day to disturb you?"

"Nothing, madam, nothing at all. Do you know what is meant by 'cumulative repression?' Well I'm suffering from 'cumulative repression.' That's all. There are different kinds of the disease and mine is of the sort for which there is nothing one can take."

"I don't understand you, John."

"No? Well, I don't seem to make myself very clear, it is true. I didn't explain 'cumulative' as thoroughly as I might have done. It's this way: Suppose you were compelled to take some drug the effect of which is known as 'cumulative.' The first dose would have little effect, and so on, up to a certain time. Then something would happen, and that something would be a result just the same as if you had taken all the doses at once—mighty serious, possibly. In my case I don't, as yet, know just how serious the effect is. I think—at least I hope—that I will recover. I seem to feel it wearing off a shade, but I'm not quite sure. The consequences of 'cumulative repression' are sometimes most serious. Insanity has been known to come. But, as for me, 'I am not mad, I am not mad,' I'm only a little—I'm only wandering in my mind."

Then, all at once, his mood changed to something absolutely earnest and his look was pitifully appealing as he leaned toward her:

"Oh, Lady Leech, can you do nothing for me?"

She did not answer him. She understood. She knew, as well as if he had told her in simpler words, that he had almost failed in his high resolve and that he had come to her, feverish, in a half madness, to be upheld and strengthened, or otherwise to be dealt with, as she would. She realized it all, and thought silently, struggling with herself as he might never know. But the good, both for his sake and hers, was strong within her and finally came her soft reply:

"You know, John, that I would help you if I could, but you know that I cannot, that I must not, even a little."

Her's was a great sympathy, yet, in the midst of it all, there was something she could not understand. She had heard that of him, from China, which made this scene incomprehensible. She knew that there was not a trace of acting, that there was no craft nor design about him, and she was but lost in a maze of troubled doubt. There was her own heart. An overwhelming pity overcame her, but she could not express it.

He sat looking at her, silent, sad, studying. Then, suddenly, he returned to earth again; his face lightened:

"What nonsense I've been talking to you! I will go into the other car and encourage the Colonel in the arena," and so he left her.

But there was a mist in her eyes as he went out. How he had reminded her of the Stafford of old, in the days when they were careless!

CHAPTER XX

LOVE WILL FIND THE WAY

The Colonel was royally in his element now. On no occasion before during all the time of detention had he played with so free a hand or felt himself so much an element of good among his fellow creatures. The psychological hour had come for him.

"We should congratulate ourselves," he resonantly declared. "Where else or under what other circumstances could have been accidentally assembled such a number of people so qualified to minister mentally to each other and make otherwise dead hours breathe as we who are here now looking into each other's eyes?" Then, very properly, feeling that he had expressed himself rather finely, he continued, "We will not waste the shining hour. We must have other stories. Mr. Showman, have you anything to say?"

Had the Colonel not known very well what he was about his last sentence would have been as tactless as it seemed to everybody cruel, and even his trusting and admiring wife looked upon him in a startled way as he thus addressed himself to an exceedingly florid man in somewhat florid garb, but with, nevertheless, an air of intelligence of the better sort and one of general understanding. He had been a not infrequent visitor and had listened quietly and with evident delight to what he had heard. The Colonel had not offended him in the least by the blunt application of the word "showman." The two knew each other and, besides, the title belonged to him properly and he was not at all ashamed of it. On the contrary. he was rather proud of it. He looked at the Colonel in a meditative way and took his time. He had faced audiences—though, perhaps, none quite so select, before—and finally remarked, very simply and to the admiration of everybody:

"You can't expect much of a plain, uneducated showman, but I know of one story, a sort of love story, too, which a friend of mine who owns a dime museum told me. I'm in the circus business myself, so do not know as much about what you might call family details as he would, but this is what he gave me. He was tickled and used some large words:"

LOVE WILL FIND THE WAY

The Ossified Man was in love with the Fat Woman. Such things happen. Men are falling in love with women every day and apparent absurdities and incongruities do not count. Love asks no odds. The Ossified Man was in love with the Fat Lady. She weighed six hundred and eighty-three pounds; he weighed just eighty three. It may have been that this singular coincidence, as shown on the billboards throughout the city, first drew the two together. Who can tell? They became acquainted and then began one of the love affairs of the thousand myriads, with which the world is at all times occupied.

The Fat Lady was fair to look upon. She had the tremendous advantage of being a landscape as well as a personality. She was, somehow, healthy, and her far-outstanding flesh was firm and white, despite her mountainous proportions. She rose and fell rythmatically as a mass with each inhalation of her fortunately great lungs and reminded one, in a way, of a volcano half quiescent. This, though, would be an utterly wrong simile. There was nothing fiery about her. Her round face showed but a somewhat intensified benevolence. Upon second thought—because she had what she deemed taste in dress and wore a variety of outside ribbon things upon her looming corsage and vast flowers upon her hat—she reminded one, billowy and heaving and with green and flowery things atop her, of the ever soft and rolling and lifting Sargossa Sea. She was a good girl in her way and had come from Indiana.

The Ossified man was nearly six feet in height, was one of the best known specimens in the show world of what may be called an animated stalactite and could scarcely be called ungraceful though a slightly too robust skeleton. His joints were singularly flexible yet and his digestion and his mind were active. "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." Thus he explained the quality of the personality of the two.

The wooing of the Ossified Man was in the nature of an innovation. He recognized the attitude in the community occupied by his inamorata and himself, not merely toward each other but with relation to all the outside world, and he conducted himself accordingly.

What the Ossified Man did—and it is greatly to his credit—was to do what any other man of his grade would do. Neither he nor the Fat Woman were highly educated but each had been through a school and each had read and could understand things and each had intelligence and no little sentiment. As remarked, the Ossified Man made his advances as would any other man of his degree. The two came to understand each other in a way and the Fat Woman began to feel somewhere, far away in her system, something she had never felt before. In truth she was beginning to fall in love with the Ossified Man. Not being a fool, the Ossified Man knew it. He realized the fact that he had found another being of the other sex, of good sense, though out of the common in appearance, as sentimental as he, the great heart once fairly stirred. Affairs drifted. He knew that he was going to propose to her and she knew that he was going to ask her to be his wife. That reflection, somehow, startled her throughout all her vast being, though a dim sub-consciousness told her that she liked him much. As for him, he resolved to stake the future upon a single poem he sent to her, confident that she would accept it gravely. And these are the few lines she received:

"All flesh is grass, and grass must turn to clay;
All bones must turn to dust, and we are they!
Since thus we turn, my own, my Colleen Bawn,
Why not unite before our breath is gone?
It is the judgment ever of the sage
That happiness is in the average;
What better equipoise than you and I,
What more assured? O, sweetheart, let us try!"

The Fat Woman was impressed but, more than that, and better in ten thousand ways, she was delighted that the man she realized she loved had finally dared to express himself, though in this odd, sentimental way. She thought much and then—there is shade of correction added—she wrote this letter:

"Dear Jim:—I understand your poem. I won't fool a bit. I care for you, Jim, as you care for me. But we will be a joke if we get married now. Can't you see that, Jim? Can't we get more like each other before we get married? We have both saved quite a lot of money. Oh, Jim, if you'll try to get thicker, I'll try to get thinner.

"Lovingly,
"SARAH."

The Ossified Man read that letter and went out and walked up and down the streets for hours. He was the happiest and most perplexed man in all the big city. His heart at least wasn't ossified.

He remembered a professor who had studied him and whom he had heard say to those about that there was no occasion for the continued ossification in such a subject, provided the stomach was all right. "I'll go to that old professor," he said, "and I'll put the case to his giblets in a way to make him salty round the eyes. And I'll write all about it to my little girl, God bless 'er!"

So his "little girl" got the letter and cried largely and with vast resources and, as we say, "braced up." "He is good, my Jim," she said to herself; "and I'll meet him half way, God bless him! I know a professor too, and I'll see him."

So each went to a professor.

Professor McFlush was the doctor whose portrait accompanied an advertisement regularly in the Sunday papers, and whom the Ossified Man had in mind. He didn't hesitate an instant after an examination of what there was of his patient. "I'll cure you in no time if you follow my directions," he declared. "My Sulphuretted Tablets will knock out the ossification and as for the rest it's all diet."

"What diet?" asked the Ossified Man.

"Hash!" roared the doctor. "Do you drink much?"

"Naw," said the Ossified Man.

"Well, you've got to—hash—hash and porter.

Hash is fattening, the potatoes in it does it. Porter is fattening, the malt in it does it. Them and my tablets together will do the business—seventeen tablets a day—dollar a bottle, thirty-four in a bottle. Five tablets before breakfast, and for breakfast hash and two bottles of porter. Dinner the same; supper the same. Anything else you want eat or drink all day long. Last two tablets just before you go to bed. Get your prescriptions filled here. Get your porter over at Johnson's wholesale grocery, I've made an arrangement with him. Ten dollars. Report weekly. Good day."

And the Ossified Man took up his task for Love's sake.

It was to Professor Slocum that the Fat Woman went. Professor Slocum was brisk and small but he had a way with the ladies.

The Fat Woman believed in him implicitly from the moment they met.

"Do you eat much?" was the first query of the Professor.

"Yes sir, considerable."

"Do you drink much?"

"Yes sir, some ale, and water most all the time."

"Madam, I am astonished! Keep on with

that diet and you'll weigh half a ton before you die, and you'll die within six months."

The Fat Woman gasped and turned pallid. She was influenced not only by love but by acute alarm.

The Professor looked upon her benignly.

"Madam," he said, "I can save you. My condensed Food Tablets and my Spirituelle Waters will do the business. The tablets will afford you sufficient sustenance for existence without affording any element for the increase of adipose tissue, while my Spirituelle Waters will gratify your thirst—the more you drink of them the better—while, at the same time, they will exercise an influence of their own. Get your tablets here at this office—fifty cents a hundred—Spirituelle Waters here too—quart bottles, twenty-five cents a bottle. Prescription: ten tablets and one bottle of the water to a meal; another bottle of the Waters before retiring. Drink all the Spirituelle Water you want during the day. Ten dollars. Report fortnightly. Good afternoon."

The professors knew their business. There could be no doubt of that. Not with any sunburst, so to speak, but steadily and day by day, the Ossified Man increased in flexibility and tissue and the Fat Woman decreased in fat.

There came a day when the Museum manager observed the change and sent for the Ossified Man.

"What's the matter, Jim?" asked the potentate.

"Nothing that I know of," was the answer.

"Do you weigh any more than you did, Jim?"

"About twenty-five pounds, I believe," was the hesitating answer.

"I'll see you in my Office at two o'clock this afternoon."

Then the Fat Woman was sent for and questioned.

"How much do you weigh, Sarah?" was the first query.

"Six hundred and twenty-three pounds, sir," was the truthful answer.

"Huh!" said the manager. Sixty pounds gone Sarah! I'll see you in my Office at two o'clock this afternoon."

An hour later the Ossified Man and the Fat Woman were engaged in earnest conversation. After a pause the Fat Woman remarked thoughtfully:

"Jim, we're going to get the g. b."

"Looks that way," said the Ossified Man.

"Do you care much?"

"Nope," said the Ossified Man, "only I wish we each could have gathered in our fifty per for another six months or so."

"Well, I don't care!" said the Fat Woman, lovingly and desperately. "I've saved up about six thousand and you've got about five, and the three or so can go."

"Suits me," said the Ossified Man.

The meeting in the manager's office that afternoon was spirited but good-natured.

"Heard you'd got stuck on each other and were trying to size up together," said the manager.

"About the size of it," said the Ossified Man.

"Well, it strikes me that there are two sizes yet," said the manager, "but that doesn't matter. You are knocking out two of my attractions. I'll have to let you both go at the end of the week."

"All right," said the Ossified Man, good-naturedly. "But," he added, as a second thought struck him, "say, Sarah is going one way and I'm going the other and there is no telling how far we may happen to pass. It might happen that we might want a job again. Now when

I come back as the Fat Man, and she as the Ossified Woman, will you take us on?"

The manager roared: "Yes, when you come back weighing six hundred and eighty-three, and Sarah eighty-three, I'll engage you, you bet!"

The Fat Woman listened approvingly.

And now the two are on a fine farm in Indiana and are happy. She still takes Professor Slocum's Condensed Food Tablets and Spirituelle Waters, and he still takes Professor McFlush's Sulphuretted Tablets and porter, and they are growing more and more alike in appearance, as they are in thoughts and aims, and have the best and most comfortable understanding. But they'll never get back to the Museum. They wouldn't if they could.

Isn't it wonderful what love can do!

CHAPTER XXI

A LITERARY LOVE AFFAIR

There was laughter, naturally, over the Showman's absurd, yet not altogether unsentimental story and, after its recital he stood, undoubtedly, more nearly on a social footing with the others. There were his clothes, of course, and another excrudescence or two, but these were incidentals. The wayfarers did not even yawn, but looked inquiringly at the beaming and bestowed-by-Providence Colonel.

After all, it is doubtful if there be anything better in the world than a spinster—if she be of the right sort. Of course all spinsters are not of the right sort; few of us are. When this one especially fine spinster was called upon by the Colonel she did not know exactly what to do. She should have been as perfectly at ease and as possessed of aplomb as any voluptuously beautiful poser in a ballroom, yet she was somewhat embarrassed. She should not have been. She was an exquisitely beautiful woman, in the view of those who know things.

With her thin nose and thin lips and general expression of cultivation and eyes in which showed loving regard and thinking, she was adorable to those upon whose eyes had been rubbed the great ointment of perception. Her one hundred and twenty-five pounds of existing womanhood, neat and good, was worth far more than its weight in gold or any other metal. When called upon this is what the spinster said most bravely:

"Colonel Livingstone, there is but one untold story of which I know and I wish I were capable of explaining to all of you how full of real life it was. Yet it seems so simple and silly that it is commonplace, though it isn't. Do you remember, Colonel, about the great tower of the Campanile, in Venice and the square down upon the pavements of which the pigeons flutter to be fed? Well this is a story—a true one—of something like those same pigeons and the Doge who first instituted the feeding of them, five hundred years ago, or something like that, only the scene and time are different. As you know, Colonel, I live in Chicago, and this is but the story of the pigeons of St. Mark's transferred to the corner of Clark and Madison streets in a city in another hemisphere. And, as I said, it is all true. This is what actually happened."

A LITERARY LOVE AFFAIR

This is a love story of two of the class who know things. Margaret Selwyn was a graduate of one of the bluest women's colleges between the two seas, and, more than that, she had a background of home culture and refinement, having parents of brains. She came from college with those acquirements which shine exteriorly, and had an incurved back, and was "tailor made" from head to heel, yet having within her all that gentleness and greatness of heart which make a woman better than anything else, not even excluding the strawberry upon which the Right Reverend Bishop pronounced such a sincere eulogy.

As to the man, Henry Bryant, he belonged socially and in all other ways to the same class as the woman, even in brains and goodness, considering, of course, the limitations of sex. Each of these two occupied a social position—if such a thing as recognized social position be defined enough in the United States—distinctly understood by the people who knew them. Each was arrogant and self-sustained, and each thoroughly and admiringly in love with the other. It was wonderful how these two, each accustomed to be obeyed, and each, in a gentle way, unconconsciously dominant with those about, grew close and yielding together. Each recognized the masterfulness, feminine or masculine, of the other, and there came a great sweetness to the understanding. Yet to these two, well-poised and mentally well-equipped, came gusts and showers of difference of opinion. The man tried to be dignified and self-contained upon these occasions, but, as a rule, failed miserably. The woman didn't even try.

But these differences throughout the months of their engagement resulted in no tragedy of importance. They both had so much of the salt of humor in their composition that they recognized the folly of even a momentary antagonism, and each laughed and begged the other's pardon or rendered the equivalent of that performance. They smiled together over their mutual short lapses of realization of what it is that makes the world go round.

At such times as they quarreled the man would tell her the foolish but probably true story of the Irishman who came annually whooping into town at fair time in some old Irish village, whirling his shillalah above his head and announcing to all the world that he was "blue-mouldy for want of a batin'." And, after this comparison, Bryant would announce, in strictest confidence, to his sweetheart, that this blessed Irishman never failed to get his "batin'," and that there were "others" even unto this day.

And so it came, in time, that this man, in love with a woman, called her his "blue-mouldy" girl, and this came to be the sweetest title in the heart of each.

With all the saving grace of the sense of proportion, which is a good part of the sense of humor, and with all their love and understanding of each other, with such characters it was inevitable that something must happen. There are laws of Nature. Vesuvius gets dyspeptic. Certain Javan islands spill up into the sky and the world has red sunsets for a while. One day, this woman, good product of a good race, sat in her parlor awaiting her lover. She was reading a book as she waited.

Now as to certain facts: Miss Selwyn was in her literary tastes an Ibsenite, Hardyite, Jamesite, or something of that sort. Bryant was a Kiplingite or Conan Doyleite. She trimmed close to something sere, and where nerves were. He was chiefly in his literary tendencies "Let her go, Gallagher!"

Margaret, having become absorbed in her book, looked up with saddened eyes from her literary draft of wormwood and tea, with the beginning of beautifully creased brows, to note the entrance of some lusty flesh and blood. Less in accord in mood and thought than were these, for the instant, never existed two people on the face of the earth, earnest lovers though they were and of about the same quality of thought and being. Something had to happen.

"Why weep ye by the tide, Ladye?" began Bryant, glancing at the face of his sweetheart, and from that to the book she had laid aside. As she did not reply immediately, he continued, taking up the volume:

"Is it The Han't that Walks or The Browning of the Overdone Biscuit that has lowered your spirits?"

"I don't know what you are talking about," she said.

"Neither do I," said he.

There they were, he, overcoat still on and hat in hand, and she sitting there and looking up at him but still enwrapped in a more or less emotional feverishness contracted from the volume in his hand. Any purely objective onlooker would have required no announcement of the approaching "circus."

The girl made an effort to recover command of herself. "Leave your hat and overcoat with the maid," she said, "and come and sit here in the window and look at the lake, while I read to you the beautiful ending of the story I have just finished."

"I will stay," Bryant declared; "I was going to ask you to go with me to the park and idle among the chrysanthemums, but this will be better." And he seated himself near the window. "May I be allowed to look at you, instead of following your advice to the letter and keeping my eyes upon the cold, gray lake water outside?" he continued. "No matter what I hear, I shall be content if I can see you."

Miss Selwyn flushed a little, but laughed good-humoredly.

Here the purely objective looker-on aforementioned might murmur over the foolhardiness of man when he meets, unawares and all uncomprehendingly, one of the bewildering moods of an impressionable sweetheart. The contented male creature rushed blindly to his fate.

"Before you begin, dear, tell me; tell me it is not Tolstoi or Ibsen you are going to read, nor yet George Meredith or Sarah Grand!"

At the last reference Miss Selwyn's eyes began to flash dangerously.

"You know I detest her!" she exclaimed.

"Do you refer to all four of the writers I mentioned as of the feminine gender?" inquired Bryant with an appearance of fervid interest. The fool was actually enjoying it all.

Seeing that her lover was only chaffing, Margaret made a brave effort, settled herself in her chair and found the place in her book.

"Before you begin—I beg your pardon," said Bryant deferentially, "but let me say that I was up late last night, and if I can't keep awake under the spell of your voice, don't blame me. Wake me up at the catastrophe, when the distant door slams or somebody breaks a teacup."

Miss Selwyn laid the volume down again, and, still smiling, answered quietly but a shade frostily:

"It would take something written with a mixture of raw brandy, blood and vermilion paint to arrest your attention, I believe! Your authors write with—with—an ax in place of a pen. But I can't harrow up my own imagination with their horrors, much less read them aloud!"

"An exclusive régime of problem novels, plays and moralizings on pessimistic lines is bad for the mental digestion," admitted Bryant in judicial tones. "Poor girl! I must teach you to live in and love this beautiful, violent, sweet and good old world of ours—the world of real nature, real men and women, and real literature!"

"I thank you for your indulgent, patronizing intentions," she flashed back at him. "You would feed butterflies on brawn, teach the bluebird to scream like a macaw, make the trembling, silver-leaved white birches all over into oaks."

"My dear Margaret—" stammered Bryant, starting up, but he could not lay the spirit he had raised.

"There are questions in life that cannot be settled by the stroke of a sword or ax," she went on. "Your favorite writer has smirched the fair figure of childhood in his brutal pictures of boys' life. He has made an unwholesome, disgusting thing out of what should be and is healthful and fine. How can you, who read him with patience, carp at my taste for what seems to me well thought and well expressed?"

"The effect of your favorites upon you to-day has not been particularly reassuring," said Bryant, more stirred by Margaret's tone and manner than by her words. Seeing that he had angered her, and trying to stem the tide of her indignation, he still blundered most flagrantly, and within a half hour the quarrel had culminated in an avowed separation for the rest of their lives, Bryant leaving the house in a state of indignant misery such as fond and over-confident lovers alone may know.

Not a word had been said, this time, about the "blue-mouldy" girl. The atmosphere had been too electric, the mood too tense for a laughing word.

Then followed silence between these two. Stubborn pride on the part of the woman, proud stubbornness on the part of the man. They were earnestly and faithfully in love, but each waited to hear the first word of forgiveness.

Bryant did write, but in his preoccupation left his letter upon the desk unposted, and in a day it was snowed under by his unopened or carelessly glanced at mail. Of course he misunderstood Miss Selwyn's silence and she resented his.

One Sunday morning Margaret, with an innate grasping and running back to the faith in which she had been bred, sought help at the source which best suited her—the relief which comes from religion.

It so chances that there is a shrine upon the bank of the Ganges. It so chances that there is what we call a Mecca. It so chances that we all occasionally seek our shrines.

Margaret Selwyn sat in her shrine, the outgrown old Episcopal Cathedral on Washington Boulevard, and listened to her pastor, one of the great old men who have grown up with a creed, but with thought and lovingness; one who has learned how to heal wounds, the wounds of which no tongue can tell, and how to advise genially and generally as to the affairs of life. Somehow, the old gentleman, with his white hair and robes, his simple, clean, old-fashioned honesty, had imparted to her a strength and faith in God which calmed and helped her. It may be there could not have been imparted to her by any one else in the world, politics and power and inherited splendor all considered, as much as could this plain old man.

The white-robed boys sang their recessional, and she became perhaps clearer and more comprehensive of mind than before she entered the church — certainly more equipoised than she had been for days.

Meditatively alive to the quiet of this Sunday noon, Miss Margaret Selwyn, as she neared the centre of the city, stopped short and looked about her. Where was she?

The pavement of the street was gray-blue, spotted with white, and gleaming here and there with the iridescent living tints of bird plumage. The air was winged by soft forms, and a crowd of idlers were scattering grains of corn upon the ground to lure and keep in sight the most graceful creatures that live between the sky and earth.

Against a sky as blue as that of Venice two snow-white pigeons were flying straight down the street toward their companions. A swarthy Italian stood with the birds almost under his feet, but, save the dark face of the street-vender, the pigeons and the perfect sky, the picture involuntarily imaged in Miss Selwyn's mind was all away and awry.

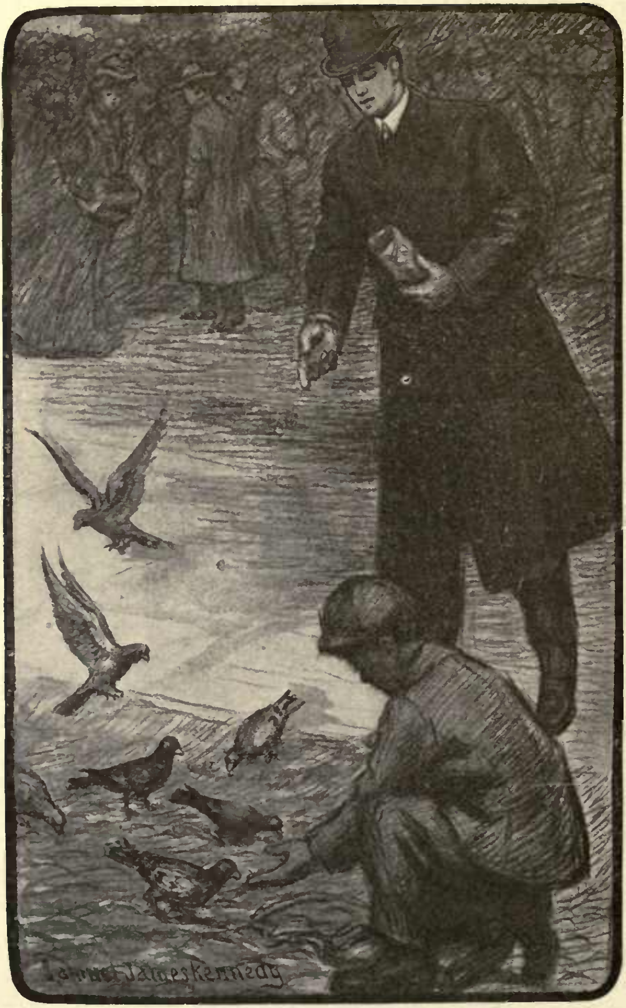
Here was no stately tower, remote and solitary as a recluse in a worldly throng; no Byzantine temple delighted her eye with its warm and gracious humanity of suggestion. The vast sunny space of the Venetian square, with its columned coffee-houses and shops, was in spirit and in truth far removed from here. St. Mark's, and the place where the dream of a moment had arisen in an impressionable mind, might have been on two different planets, so opposed were they in every outline, spirit and detail—save one: the fluttering, flying, eager, unafraid pigeons.

The sun shot side glances down through the thoroughfare and really did some good on this day, because this was the day of the Nazarene, and even the money-seekers on this day had abandoned in their affairs the consumption of bituminous coal. That is why on Sunday, in one of the greatest cities in the world, the air is clear and the breath better. That is one reason why, on Sunday, the American cousins of the "pigeons of St. Mark's" come fluttering from somewhere about the city, from only the Maker of them knows where, and dip downward out of the ether trustingly to the feet of the passer-by, be he thug or preacher.

Miss Selwyn had never heard of the vast flock of doves which dwell in security among the towering buildings of the city. Their wings flash across wide darkling streets all day, welcome to every careworn man who watches, for a moment, their graceful flight. They were here before her now—there, parading strutting, looking up hopefully toward the men about them, each eagerly seeking the next flip of the corn. They were—and are to-day—because of some gracious instinct in humanity, the best casual street exemplification of what is best in human nature.

They dripped and dropped from somewhere almost simultaneously. There was one who strutted the most struttingly and whose only really justifiable claim was that from crown to midway of his body he had such iridescent purple as all the shell-opening fishermen of Tyre and Sidon never devised half-way. There was another one, a quaint little maiden, who will probably marry some English nobleman of the birds, snow-white, with strange geometrical lines criss-cross about her back, and who was almost duplicated by a dozen or two others of her breed. There were two rufous things, the red of whose top and back lapsed into a white beneath, almost as exquisitely as blends the splendid red hair of a woman into the ever accompaning white of the skin beneath. There were little drizzled things, pert, like bantams, off-breeds which had introduced themselves into the community. And there was nothing but just a tossing about among those beautiful creatures upon the pavement there, nothing but an Oliver Twistish clamor for "more" from those who stood above them, to whom they were doing more good than they could know.

On week days the pigeons fly out in foraging parties to the railway yards and the neighborhood of the huge grain elevators. They can be seen glancing above the tall buildings, far flying, specks of gleaming light, along the hollow spaces above the streets as they go and come from their feeding places. The crowded masses of wagons, street cars, carriages, horses and hurrying people keep the pigeons from the street where they are most at home together for six days. But on the seventh, when the burden of labor is lifted or a brief space from the shoulders of toiling mankind, the pigeons rally in force upon one of the most busy, prosaic, care-breeding corners in the great spreading city by the lake. And every Sunday come, as surely, men and boys to feed the air-travelers and look at them with the worship all men feel for natural beauty and grace.



"HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS AS A CHILD"

Miss Selwyn had chanced upon this unique function, the pigeons' Sunday banquet. Here were no appealing graces of architecture and Venetian balm of atmosphere. The rough pavement on which the yellow corn was scattered was a contrast to the smooth and perfect floor of the great Piazza. On one side was the inevitable American drug store, plain, matter-of-fact, yet giving, by its crimson and purple window globes, the only touch of pure color in that part of the street. Across the way was a hotel. A clothing store, with its paraphernalia of advertisement, occupied another corner. It was Clark and Madison Streets.

Miss Selwyn saw every detail of this scene at a glance, and then her eyes were fastened upon one figure.

Standing among the others was Henry Bryant. His straight, powerful figure, commanding in presence and pose, seemed to separate him, in a way, from the men around him. But, like all the onlookers, he bought corn and scattered the grain on the ground, watching the pigeons as they clustered around his largess. He was as unconscious as a child, and as gentle, about his simple pleasure. His face was a little worn and changed by the suffering of the days of separation from her—Margaret's eyes were quick to see that.

That was the man from whom she had separated after a wordy war over wordy books. That was her lover over there. His whole look, attitude and occupation appealed to her tenderness. Love rushed tumultously onward, a tide of irresistible strength, sweeping away every carefully-built structure of repulse and every barrier of opinion. Their quarrel was forgotten. Yet the reserve of a proud nature and of custom kept Miss Selwyn from crossing over to speak to Bryant.

She walked home with a springing step. Once the thought came into her mind that Bryant might go away somewhere at once; that the message she was hurrying to send him might not reach him, and at the idea she felt faint and disheartened. She stopped and, for an instant, almost turned back, but, checking herself with a smile at her own impatience and trivial forebodings, she held on her homeward way again.

She could see her lover, and see him as plainly as when he was in reality before her, all unconscious of her presence, half absent-mindedly and all tenderly scattering grain for the cooing, fluttering pigeons at his feet.

The next morning, Bryant, looking over his mail with little relish—for much of the interest in living was out of him just then—found a letter which aroused him most effectually from his mood of listlessness. It said:

DEAR: I am "blue-mouldy for want of a batin'." Come to me.
MARGARET.

CHAPTER XXII

ABERCROMBIE'S WOOING

None but could smile upon the spinster and be glad of the little tale she told. Half the world knows of the pigeons so nourished on one of the most crowded corners in the heart of a great, turbulent city, but none had thought before of what might accompany this exhibition of the fact that there is still a regard for beings of the lower and less grasping life. Very pleasant was the conversation and very understanding were the comments, but the Colonel, like many a commander of the past, from Joshua down, noted the swift passing of the hours of day and was insatiate for more of what might be attained before it was too late. He called upon the Banker. That gentleman, easy, suave and really a good specimen of the class which inclines us to save by taking care of our savings—and only rarely departing with them—was quite equal to the demand at the paying-teller's window. "I have listened," he said, "to these accounts, some of adventure, some of fancy, some of love and persistence, and it has occurred to me that even I might contribute something to the general fund. Oddly enough, as coming from me, what I shall tell is a story of love and courage and persistence all combined. It is not a tale of some far country, but one of our modern life, a tale of true lovers whose union was opposed but who came together at last in spite of obstacles. I think we may term it

"ABERCROMBIE'S WOOING"

Mr. Gentil Abercrombie is a fine fellow, quick-witted, and amiable, with prospects in the world, but he is not, as yet, wealthy. Last spring he fell in love with Miss Frances Dobson, and the young lady seemed not entirely oblivious of the fact nor altogether displeased with it. The affair appeared prosperous to the hopeful Abercrombie until the middle of June, when the Dobson family moved to their country home at a modest little watering place not far from the city, leaving the suitor in a position he did not like. A resolute gentleman, though, is Mr. Abercrombie, and he followed his star, taking apartments at the watering-place hotel, coming into town by train daily and returning in the evening.

The young lady thus sought had the fortune to be the only daughter of her somewhat austere parents, Mr. James Dobson and Mrs. Irene Dobson, each distinctly of the class not to be trifled with by any too aspiring suitor. Abercrombie was admitted to the Dobson residence, for he has good social standing—but his reception was not as warm as the weather. It appeared to each of the lovers early in the season that it was best to be politic, and that Abercrombie was not, as yet, looked upon by the father and mother as a person with that superabundance of worldly goods and of stability of character and wisdom which should appertain to the husband of the Family Pride. Hence it came that Abercrombie made an effort whenever an opportunity offered to become what he remarked to himself as "solid with the old folks." Hence it came, too, that at a certain trying time there arrived in his immediate vicinity a certain quantity and quality of disaster.

It chanced that on one occasion, Abercrombie, seeking, as usual, to ingratiate himself with the parents, drifted into a discussion concerning the bringing up of children and expressed himself to the effect that, in place of the usual inane though amusing fairy stories and things of that sort, children should in their youth, when the memory fairly petrifies things, be entertained with pleasant tales about natural history and in fact about anything likely to aid most in future equipment for the great struggle in the world. Of natural history he made a point. Well, one evening, in just what poets call the "gloaming," Abercrombie, the parents, Frances and young Erastus Dobson were sitting together upon the front porch, when, suddenly, from some inscrutable impulse, Erastus broke out with the exclamation:

"Mr. Abercrombie, tell me a story."

Here was a situation! It flashed upon Abercrombie, that he had, as already mentioned, impressed upon the elder people the fact that, in his opinion, the youthful mind should be loaded with natural history when tales were imposed upon it. There was no alternative. Here were the older people listening and expectant. Here was Erastus, vociferous. Here was his own sweetheart, sitting in the half darkness and wondering if he were equal to the occasion!

Abercrombie quivered for a moment trying to collect his senses which seemed to have been, somehow, "jolted" by Erastus' request, and then suddenly became so desperate and cold-blooded that he could not understand himself.

"Yes, Erastus," he said, affably; "I will tell you a story, most willingly." Then he continued:

"This is the story of the Boy and the Bull and the Horned Hen. Once there was a boy. It has frequently happened that there was a boy, so that it is hardly worth while referring to such a thing now, but, since we have mentioned it, we'll let it go. Tum-a-row! This boy lived in the country and was kind to a Hen. Little did he know that the hen appreciated and remembered it, but she did! One day this boy started to cross a meadow in which was a savage bull, and the boy forgot he had on his red sweater. In the middle of the meadow stood a tree which was blasted and which looked almost like a cone. It was what a young kindergarten teacher might describe as a trunk from which the branches had been riven away in some of Nature's convulsions, probably electric. Anyhow, the bull started for the boy and the boy started for the tree. Tum-a-row! The boy reached the tree four and one-third seconds before the bull reached the same place, and the boy began climbing and was at least thirty feet from the ground before the bull arrived. It is needless to say that the boy climbed with much rapidity. The bull followed rapaciously—yes, that's the word—and began climbing also with great rapidity behind the boy, and there was a race to what—if the term may be applied to such a dead trunk of a tree—to the topmast. There the tree sloped to a point, which the boy, climbing with avidity—that's the word,—reached easily, under the stress of circumstances. The bull, climbing swiftly after, attained a height of between ten and fifteen feet from his intended victim, and then, reaching the slope of compression, as one may say, of the dead tree, suddenly found himself without sufficient grasp and slid down, again and again, as he sought to reach the apex of the cone. The boy, meanwhile, was and properly, too, in a state of utmost fear, as the bull from time to time seemed almost successful in his upward attempts.

"But there is a limit to endeavor. The bull, fatigued at last, slid downward to the ground, just as the hen, who, happily for the boy, had noted from the distant barnyard what was going on, came desperately to the rescue. The struggle which ensued was something doubtless without a parallel, or anything else in the way of similitude, in the history of single combats. It was something frightful! The bellowing of the hen, the hissing and cackling of the bull, the scattering of scales from both adversaries as they clashed together, cannot be adequately described. But the end came quickly. There came a moment, when perspiring and panting, the hen gored the bull with all her might, mind and strength, and he fell lifeless to the ground.

"The moral of this story is, be kind to a hen. Tum-a-row!"

"Why do you say 'Tum-a-row'?" suddenly demanded Erastus.

"Well, I hardly know, myself," said Abercrombie. "I guess it's a sort of accompaniment. It came in an old farmer's song I heard when I was a little boy, in an old song which told about a young man who went 'down in the medder for to mow,' and who 'mowed around till he did feel a pizen sarpint bite him on the heel;' and, every little while, through the song came the word 'Tum-a-row.' That's the reason

'Tum-a-row' comes in so often in the story. It isn't my fault; it just seems to belong. Tum-a-row!"

"Tell me another! Tell me another!" shouted young Erastus, but there came no sound from the twilight which encompassed the old people, nor from the gloaming about the sweetheart, though little did it matter. Abercrombie had passed the caring point!

"One more will I tell you," he said, speaking in a resonant and rotund voice, to the wide-mouthed and expectant Erastus. "This is the story of the Dark Forest, the Charcoal Burners, the Witch and the Boa Constrictor.

"Once there was a forest so dark that you cannot conceive of its darkness. Oh! it was just a forest dark from Darkville! It was fringed about with a forest which was somewhat lighter, in which things lived, but nothing lived in the forest itself; it was too black! Among the people who lived in this lighter fringe of forest were some Charcoal Burners. You will always find charcoal burners connected with a deep forest story, particularly in the German Medieval Legends. The Charcoal Burners in those stories usually lived in some glade in the middle of the wood, but the Charcoal Burners we are telling about lived on the outside for the reason we have given—but they ought not really to be called 'burners,' because they did not burn anything. Whenever orders came for charcoal they simply took their shovels and went down an aisle into the depth of the inner wood and dug out great hunks of the blackness, which they brought out and stacked upon wagons, and which were conveyed to Vienna and Weisbaden and Oshkosh and all the other charcoal commercial centers.

"Now all this has nothing to do with the story. These matters about the Charcoal Burners I have related only because it chances that from the Charcoal Burners themselves the real story was gained. We ought to be grateful to them for what they have told.

"Four or five miles east of the Charcoal Burners lived a Boa Constrictor. He was sixty feet long and had a gilt-edged appetite. I don't believe in using slang, and gilt-edged is slightly slangy, but the bald fact stands out that he had a gilt-edged appetite. He lived mostly on wild boars, but, when the supply of wild boars gave out on any occasion, he lived on most anything that came along.

"Now, five miles east of the Boa Constrictor lived a Witch, and she was a witch from Witchville. She was not any common witch, but one whose slightest anathema would just curl your hair. Talk about brimstone! Why brimstone would be just ice cream in any comparison you could make between this witch and other things in the world. She knew her business! Well, this Witch had three children, two sons and a daughter, nice little children, in their way. It happened, unfortunately, one afternoon, that they strayed into the forest; and this afternoon happened to be the particular afternoon on which the Boa Constrictor had run out of wild boars. He consumed the kids—I beg your pardon; young as you are, I beg your pardon—I meant to say that he devoured the three young children, that he encompassed them after the constrictor manner.

"By and by, the Witch missed her children and, induced by maternal instinct, went out looking for them, and so came to the abode of the Constrictor. They had been on good enough terms and she approached him affably.

" 'Good morning, Mr Constrictor,' said she.

" 'Good afternoon, Mrs. Witch,' said the Constrictor.

" 'Have you seen my children?' asked the lady.

" 'I have not', said the Constrictor.

"The Witch was about to depart when a thought seemed to seize her and she turned just about half way, assuming what may be designated as a suddenly reflective attitude;

" 'Are you sure, Mr. Constrictor?' said she.

" 'I am sure' said he.

"Only a person with nerves under absolute control could have been present on that occasion and considered unmoved the changes in the Witch's face. The accumulative grimness of her countenance became something startling. She spoke slowly but her voice had that hard, low, even tone which we read about in novels.

" 'What is the reason that you are so big in the middle?' said she.

" 'I am not big in the middle, your eyes deceive you,' said he.

" 'You are lying, Mr. Constrictor,' said she, 'and I'm going to make you tell the truth. I am going to make an Incantation over and around and all about you that will give you some idea of what forces are at work in the universe.'

"Then from somewhere about her skirt, she pulled out a broomstick, and waved it five times, and said; 'Abracadabra, Pentagon' and some other things, and, of course, the performance had its effect and the Constrictor had to tell the truth. He simply had to! He admitted the consumption of the three children.

"Imagine the demeanor of the Witch when she learned that her three children had been devoured by the Constrictor! For a little time she was speechless and white in the face, then, as reason and the control of her powers returned, the malignant look which came was something that simply defies description. Her voice, as she spoke to the Constrictor this time, was shrill and raucous.

" 'I am going to pronounce an Anathema upon you,' she said, 'and I'm going to do it now. I am going to make you the same at both ends.'

"A very adroit and clever Constrictor was this, and he said nothing. But he chuckled to himself: 'If she makes me the same at both ends, I will have more fun than ever. With a mouth at each end, I can eat twice as many wild boars and be twice as happy.' He coiled closer to the ground with a look of affected submission, and the Witch went on with her Anathema.

"It was a fine anathema, there was no question about it. Even the leaves on the trees about first turned brown, then crackled and then smoked, as she was making her few remarks. She completed the formula and departed, leaving the Constrictor to become the same at both ends, and he lay there, still chuckling, waiting for his double-headedness and double enjoyment in the future.

"Then came to him a sort of quivery feeling, and he knew that he was changing. It did not take more than an hour at the utmost, when that Constrictor suddenly realized that he was the same at both ends, but—he did not have two heads! He had two tails! There he was, a great Boa Constrictor, sixty feet long, with a tail at each end. Of course only one thing could happen to a Boa Constrictor with a tail at each end. He must starve to death, simply because he could not eat. Day after day passed, and the Constrictor grew less and less in dimensions, and, finally, the day came when there was only a little worm, smaller than an angle-worm. Then the day came when there was no worm at all.

"And that is the end of the story, because there isn't any more worm!"

The last sentence of the tale was concluded.

Silence prevailed for a moment or two, and then there was a gasp of delight and approval from Erastus.

"That's bully!" he said. "Will you tell me some more, some other time, Mr. Abercrombie?"

"Certainly, my boy," said Abercrombie. "It is well that we should become acquainted with natural history, and in the simple tales I tell you I shall endeavor at all times to introduce such information as will increase your store of knowledge. Above all, we must get acquainted with natural history."

He paused. The boy had nothing to say. Unfortunately, nobody else had anything to say. To Abercrombie the silence seemed, in a vague way that he could not fully comprehend, destructive. There was something the matter with the atmosphere and he knew it. The gloaming had drifted into darkness, and he could no longer see either his prospective father-in-law or mother-in-law or his sweetheart. He knew only that, as an adviser of parents of the younger male offspring of the two who were also parents of his one object in life, he had flashed presumptuously in the pan, that, too, in the dimness of the gathering darkness, when people are most reflective and that he had accomplished the possibility irretrievable.

The silence was broken at last by the voice of Mrs. Dobson. The voice was thin and didn't seem to really "break" the silence. It seemed to split it neatly.

"Are those your ideas, Mr. Abercrombie, as to the sort of knowledge of natural history which should be conveyed to young children?"

"Yes, I'd like to know, myself," added Mr. Dobson.

Not a laugh, not a comment, not a sound came from the corner where sat Miss Frances Dobson. She was strictly an aside.

Abercrombie pondered through swift seconds. He was in what, in his own mind—so much are we addicted to the pernicious habit of thinking in the vernacular—'in a hole'. But, the man at bay has frequently proved a hero in a plain North American way. Abercrombie arose to the occasion!

"It may be," he said, "that in the telling to Erastus of these simple tales, I have not followed precisely the practices of those generally engaged in the teaching of youth. It may be that I have not instructed him in the manner in which I might have done had I allowed a few years to lapse and my beard to grow longer and had shaved my upper lip. It may be that in the tales I have told Erastus there are certain discrepancies, synchronisms, and anachronisms. My pictures may have possessed a shade too much of the impressionist character. But what of it? What I wanted to do was to give Erastus a general idea of Black Forests, Witches, and Boa Constrictors."

Silence reigned again, and reigned very thoroughly for some time. Then up rose the modern young woman.

No one in the room could see any one else, but all could hear. What the parents heard was the sound of light footsteps along the porch and then, after a pause;

"You're a ridiculous gentleman,—Don't pull me so!"

What they heard also was a thoughtful and generally commendatory remark from Erastus:

"Say, old man, you're all right. You're the stuff!"

They heard no more at the time. The next morning was a fine morning—there have been lots of them—and, as breakfast was about ending, there took place a conversation between her parents and Miss Dobson—a conversation inaugurated by them but ended, decidedly, by her.

Given a young woman, the only one in the family and possessed of character, she can usually make her parents "know their place," though doing all this, of course, with kindness and consideration. Miss Dobson and Abercrombie are formally engaged. The fortunate but alarmed young man had not realized what would happen when the reinforcements came up.

CHAPTER XXIII

EVAN CUMMINGS' COURTSHIP

There was frivolous talk and disputation and some serious reasoning, as the necessary sequence of what had been told. There was discussion as to what excuse there had been for the demeanor of Mr. Abercrombie, and even some quiet suggestion to the Banker that, very much to his credit, he could, himself, imagine things, upon occasions such as this, and that, possibly, he might have risen somewhat to the emergency, but the chaffing was of the listless sort. The sun was not visible save from the rear end of the rear car of the train, but its rays deflected, slanted, yellow-red, along the sides of the pass calling the attention of all to the fact that it was almost supper-time. More hanging together in a Wayside Tales companionship? Hardly! They had appetites and they dissolved as dissolve the vapors, or the friends made by letters of introduction, or snow on the top of a distillery, or your dreams, or Mary when you need her, or anything else. Similes are the cheapest thing on the market! The sum of it was that an afternoon had been killed without undue atrocity and now all scattered and prepared themselves and went in to supper. They enjoyed themselves together and then the ladies drifted back to the talking habitat, while the men, or at least a number of them, found the smoking compartments, either the big one of the Cassowary or one of those in other coaches.

There are all kinds of traveling men. This is not generally understood, but it is a fact. The impression has, somehow, obtained that a traveling man or "Drummer," or whatever we should call Dickens' "Bagman" in the western Hemisphere, is a person who is careless of the conventionalities, who relies upon a certain hardihood in thrusting himself anywhere into the place of immediate consequence or convenience. Never was a greater mistake in popular opinion. There are blatant commercial travelers, of course. There will be fools in any part of the world's work. It is a matter of fact, though, that the man whose business it is to influence mentally other men and women must, necessarily, have tact and understanding and that he must be often more quick of conception and more readily responsive to the proper demand of his fellow-creatures than one less extremely educated in certain ways of the vagrant world.

The man called upon was one of the greater type. He laughingly accepted the situation:

"Yes," he said, "I'll tell you a story, but it is so foolish that I can hardly expect you to believe it. It is merely the story of one man I knew and of how he got his wife. He did not get her in quite the ordinary way. I'll tell you all I know about him, and I've known him almost from boyhood. I'll tell you everything as it was."

EVAN CUMMINGS' COURTSHIP

I think Evan Cummings had the most remarkable personality of any traveling man I ever met, a personality which indicated itself especially in the closing incident of his love affair. He was a good-looking fellow, of Scotch descent, with all the tenacity of purpose of his race. He was a good man to meet upon the train. When we were gathered in the smoking compartment Evan was as full of spirits as the rest, but I noticed that, while taking an active part in the conversation, he never told any of the somewhat risque stories that the air of the smoking compartment too often breeds. Instead, he would tell uncanny tales of Scotland in the old days, tales of wizards and warlocks, and of the strange things to be seen at night on ancient battle-fields, and we always listened to him with interest. He was mightily fixed in his views and many a good-natured dispute we had with him over this or that. Eh, but he was stubborn!

Evan was a good man of business, though, and had a host of friends. Among these was the conductor of a train on which he often traveled and the friendship developed into such a degree of intimacy that one day the conductor, Luke Johnson, invited him out to dinner with him. Evan, having no particular business on hand that evening, accepted the invitation.

Johnson's house was in the suburbs, decidedly. It was on the very picket line of the army of houses of the ever-marching city, out on the prairie at least a couple of blocks distant from any other house. A plank sidewalk extended to it from the more settled district near and, with its barns and sheds and vine-covered front, it did not have a lonesome look. Inside Evan found the house quite as prepossessing as its exterior and he found something else there more prepossessing still.

Johnson's family consisted of himself, his wife, his child, little Gabriel, about four years old, and his sister-in-law, a Miss Salome Hinman. Evan found Mrs. Johnson a pleasant sort of a woman and found in Miss Hinman his undeniable affinity. Stolid as he usually was in the presence of femininity, he felt, in the very marrow of his bones, that he was a lost man. That he succumbed so quickly was not altogether to be wondered at. Miss Hinman was pretty, was very slender—what a school-girl writer would call willowy or lissom or, possibly, svelte—and was wildly devoted to her little nephew, of whom she had the chief care.

Well, Evan didn't waste any time. He contrived it so that he was in the city often and, as often, was at Johnson's house, making vigorous love to Miss Salome. Finally, he accepted a good city position with his firm and abandoned the road, just for the sake of being near his sweetheart, though he liked the road better. All would have gone well now, but for the young lady. He knew she cared for him, for she had admitted it, but she was a bit of a coquette and couldn't resist the temptation of playing a fish so firmly hooked. Urge as Evan might, he could not persuade her to fix a date for their marriage. She would not absolutely deny him, but she was elusive. He became desperate. Something must be done. It was.

One day just as Evan, brooding as he walked, neared the home of his sweetheart to renew his useless pleading, he noticed little Gabriel playing in the yard with a toy balloon the string of which was tied to a button-hole of his jacket and which tugged strenuously away at him. Evan sat down upon the horse-block in front of the house, watching the boy dreamily, and trying to devise a plan to bring Miss Salome to terms, when, all at once, his planning ceased as suddenly as the stopping of a clock. The boy and the balloon had given him an awful inspiration! He returned to town.

That evening Evan Cummings bought a toy balloon, some bird-shot and one of the tiniest of little baskets. In his room at the hotel he attached the string of the balloon to the handle of the basket. Then, as the balloon with its burden rose toward the ceiling, he dropped shot after shot into the little receptacle until the balloon could no longer raise it. Taking the little basket of shot to the drug store, he had the basket and shot carefully weighed. He now knew the exact lifting power of a toy balloon—it was just five ounces. He had seen Gabriel weighed and knew that he tipped the scale at forty-two pounds. The calculation was easy; sixteen ounces in a pound; sixteen multiplied by forty-two makes six hundred and seventy-two. Gabriel, therefore, weighed 672 ounces: a single toy balloon would lift not quite five ounces; five goes into six hundred and seventy-two, one hundred and thirty-four times; one hundred and thirty-five toy balloons would lift little Gabriel. The next day Evan went to a harness shop and had a stout leather harness made which would just about fit Gabriel, passing round his small body under the arms and over his shoulders, from each of which two broad straps extended upward and met in a strong iron ring. Then he went out and invested in two hundred and fifty toy balloons—thus adding over an hundred for requirements and contingencies. He bought, also, a stout piece of clothesline, fifty feet long, and a thick cord two hundred feet long, which would, if required, sustain the weight of a man. The next afternoon he attached the balloons to the clothesline, not all in a bunch, but at intervals, that in the event of an accident to one, another would not be affected. At the lower end of the clothesline was a strong steel snap.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon, when he knew Mrs. Johnson was to be absent in town, Evan hired a covered express-wagon, in which he imprisoned his balloons and was driven near the Johnson's place. A block or two away from there, he dismissed the driver and wagon and went on alone, the balloons tugging at him fiercely as he walked. He saw little Gabriel playing in the yard, as usual, and called to him. The youth came running out and shouted in childish glee when he saw the mountain of red balloons.

"Would you like to take a ride, Gabriel?" asked Evan kindly.

"Yep, Yep!" cried Gabriel. "Gimme a ride."

Evan carefully and securely adjusted the harness upon the youngster and then snapped the contrivance at the end of the clothes-line into the ring above the boy's head. He tied one end of his two hundred feet of cord firmly to the same ring. Holding on to the cord, he eased up gently and had the satisfaction of seeing Gabriel lifted from his feet.

At the height of thirty feet little Gabriel emitted a sudden bawl such as a four year-old probably never gave before; at fifty feet his screams were something startling and when, at last, he hung dangling two hundred feet above, the string of balloons rising fifty feet higher still, the volume and loudness of his shrieking seemed scarce diminished by the distance. He swung and swayed far away up there a wonderful kicking object, the string of balloons uplifting above him like a pillar of fire, the whole forming a wonderful vision against the sky. Evan calmly tied the end of the cord to the hitching staple in the horse-block, then sat down upon the block and drew out and opened his pocket knife.

The front door of the house suddenly flew open and a hysterical young woman reached Evan's side in the fraction of an instant. She looked upwards and shrieked out:

"Oh! Oh! What are you doing with little Gabriel! He'll be killed! Oh! he'll he killed!"

"No he won't," answered Evan, quietly, "I can pull him down at any time. He'll stay where he is—that is unless I cut this cord," he added reflectively, as he held the blade of his knife against it. "Salome, will you marry me and fix the date for the ceremony now? If you won't promise, I'll cut the cord!"

"Oh, you brute! Oh, you murderer! I'll never— Oh—"

"I tell you he's all right," explained Evan. "Promise when we'll be married, and I'll pull him down."

The girl but shrieked the louder and, sinking down, clung pleadingly to his knees.

"Save him!" she cried. "He'll be killed! Oh, poor little Gabriel!"

"I tell you he won't be killed! Little Gabriel has only gone aloft, to be nearer his namesake. He's almost up to where 'the cherubim and seraphim continually do sing.' Don't you hear him singing himself, already? Will you fix the date or shall I cut the cord?"

The girl was getting calmer, though quivering all over. She only sobbed now; "He'll be killed! He'll be killed! Oh my poor little Gabriel!"

"I tell you he will not," reiterated Evan. "I don't believe he will be killed even when I cut the string. He will alight gently somewhere, as the gas in the balloons gradually exudes, and somebody will take care of him. It may not be in this county, but he will alight. When will you marry me?"

The young woman did not answer.

"Salome," said Evan, now pleadingly. "You know that you love me and that I love you. Why not stop all this dalliance and coquetting? you know you are going to be my wife. Will you not make it all definite?"

Salome looked up into her lover's eyes, then bowed her head. Finally she looked up again and sobbed out:

"Y-e-s, only pull down little Gabriel."

"When shall the wedding be? Will the twentieth of next month do?"

"Y-e-s."

Evan closed his pocket knife. Then taking hold of the cord he began pulling little Gabriel down. As that youth, still loudly bellowing, reached the ground, Salome caught him up and darted into the house with him. Evan paid slight attention to people who came running to see what the red thing aloft had been. He said only that he had been trying an experiment. Then he gathered up the balloons and carried them into the woodshed, where they rose in a mass to the roof and stayed there. Then he went into the house and had a talk with the indignant Salome. It was an exciting session, but it ended peaceably.

Well, she married him, as she had promised, for honesty was among her virtues. She looks upon her husband as a desperate character and, so, is in love with him, of course.

I'm not surprised at the whole business. It was Evan all over.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SWISS FAMILY ROBERTSON

The fact as was learned early in the morning, that there must elapse one more day before relief came, was, it must be feared, absolutely a relief to Colonel Livingstone When Stafford told him the situation he beamed. He was certainly at his best. He called upon the Man From Nowhere.

The title of The Man From Nowhere had been bestowed upon a quiet and dignified gentleman who but smiled and listened all the time, but had said very little. During the first stress of the imprisonment, he had been one of the most energetic and helpful among those of the passengers who had shown the quality of facing a situation. He had exerted himself to some purpose from the beginning and had assisted in making more or less comfortable those who did not seem capable of taking care of themselves. He had been given the title of "The Man From Nowhere," because he had declared that he really had no home but was a wanderer for pleasure, with no fixed place of abode. He was a man of about sixty years of age, grey-mustached and affable. Now, as he came forward, with an apparent degree of awakened interest in what was going on, he was received with applause. It was the Colonel, as usual, who expressed himself:

"Glad to see you aroused, sir. Are you, too, going to favor us with a story?"

The Man From Nowhere laughed: "It's hardly a story," he said, "but, in listening to the brief discussion as to the degree in which we are appreciated in this world, I was involuntarily reminded of the bitter experience of a young friend or rather of five young friends of mine. They were not appreciated, and took steps accordingly. What they did was merely to segregate themselves. You will readily perceive that by segregating yourself you may avoid all the annoyance of non-appreciation. That the experiment did not, in this instance, result at once in a permanent remedy for all oppressive circumstances was, I think, due, not to any lack of proper conception in the minds of my young friends, but rather to their inexperience in certain matters of detail. In some of its aspects it was a sad affair, but I will relate the whole thing to you just as it was told me by the principal actor. It is but the simple story of

THE SWISS FAMILY ROBERTSON

When I look back across the years—I am nearly thirteen now—the vision which arises of trying adventure with my sister and three brothers seems like what I have seen somewhere alluded to as the baseless fabric of a dream, or, if not that, at least some freak of the waking imagination. Yet certain it is that the five of us, John, Mary, Francis, Herbert and Elwyn Robertson, aged respectively eleven, nine, eight and six years—Herbert and Elwyn being twins—had such strange experiences in a strange land as can never be forgotten by any of us. Hard indeed to undergo were some of our vicissitudes, and always thankful am I, when the memory of that time returns, that my greater age and possibly greater force of character enabled me to become guide and mentor when certainly a counselor was needed.

Strangely enough, all our adventures were the indirect result of an earnest perusal of a most fascinating volume entitled The Swiss Family Robinson, in which was related the story of a family named Robinson, cast away upon a lone island in the Pacific Ocean. The family was a remarkable one, and the character of the father I admired especially. Not only was he a man of extended general information, but one who regarded thoughtfully the circumstance that almost any condition may be improved by the diligent, and who was truly grateful for something in every chapter of the book. The mother and children each displayed traits almost as admirable. The island, too, was as remarkable as the family, since, though it was but a small place, the castaways were fortunate enough to discover almost every useful plant, bird and beast known to the torrid, temperate or frigid zones. Taken altogether, the tale was such as to arouse a spirit of something nearly akin to envy in the minds of all of us save the twins, who were, of course, too young to understand. It was no wonder, since our great-great-grandfather on our mother's side was said to have come from Switzerland, that the three oldest of us called ourselves the Swiss Family Robertson and imagined many things. There came a time when the fancy became a grave reality, even to the twins.

It is with no little feeling and hesitation that

I approach any allusion to the causes which led to the practical expatriation of five people—in the prime of youth, it is true, but inexperienced—and their subjection to a manner of existence such as they had never imagined could be real. Even now the matter so affects me that I must be pardoned by the reader for not relating the unpleasant details. Suffice it to say that occasions arose when the views of our parents unhappily failed to coincide with those of Mary, Francis and myself, and that our conduct was held, by those who had the power, to merit corporal punishment, a punishment which, it has always seemed to me, was inflicted with far more vehemence than any possible occasion could demand. Our spirits revolted at what occurred, and the three of us, who, as explained, had just finished reading The Swiss Family Robinson, held inflamed but deliberate counsel together and determined resolutely upon a course which should give us liberty of conscience and of action. I admit frankly that, being of a self-respecting disposition, and it may be to an extent a natural leader, I was foremost in these councils and mapped out the general plan of action. Increasing years have given me more philosophy and taken from my impulsiveness, but at that time I did not hesitate. In short, under my inspiration we resolved to seek a more congenial clime, where, if we did not luxuriate in all the so-called advantages of a super-refined civilization, we should at least have the more quiet and assured happiness which obtains where Nature is primeval. Our resolution became fixed. That Herbert and Elwyn, the twins, became of the emigrating party was but an incident, they having discovered our plans for departure and insisting upon accompanying us. Their wish was reluctantly granted lest the clamor they would inevitably raise in the event of a refusal should reveal our plans.

Not only were we determined upon the new life, but we resolved to isolate ourselves so completely from the unpleasant recent past as even to change our names, it being decided that each should select a new one for himself or herself. As for me, having lately read a story of the Norsemen, I selected the name of Wolfgang; Mary chose that of Abyssinia, and Francis, for what reason I cannot imagine, adopted that of Chickum. The naming of Herbert and Elwyn was left to Abyssinia, who, after looking over a newspaper, called one Krag and the other Jörgensen. Then began in earnest our preparations for departure.

It was, of course, necessary, as I endeavored to impress upon my fellows—if Abyssinia may be included in such a term—to observe the utmost secrecy and discretion in all our movements. This injunction was observed faithfully by all save Krag and Jörgensen, whose course was frequently such as might, I feared, attract the attention of our parents. Fortunately they appeared all unknowing of our designs.

The first thing to be accomplished was the getting together and bestowal in a safe place of such stores as we could carry away and as would be most serviceable to us in an uninhabited and possibly barren region. In this difficult task Abyssinia, Chickum and I shared about equally. The place of concealment finally decided upon was a small shed which had formerly been a henhouse, and which stood against a board fence on the eastern side of the kitchen garden. Here, beneath a heap of straw, we concealed our accumulations. I pondered deeply over what the nature of our stores should be, and I trust I may say, with a pride not altogether unbecoming, that my selections were justified by the result. Slowly but surely the material accumulated until there came a time when we felt that we were fairly equipped for our departure. It was just after the beginning of July, and the weather was sultry, but, with an eye for the future, Abyssinia secured from the extra household supplies four quilts, five large sheets and six jars of raspberry and strawberry jam. She contributed also a bag of salt, pepper, some old knives and forks, half a dozen tin plates and as many tin cups, a breadpan, a frying-pan with a broken handle, and two tin pails. I added a light but excellent ax, several boxes of matches, a great ball of stout cord, an enormous slab of dried beef, two boxes of crackers, a box of candles, some large potatoes, an old carving-knife, some fishhooks, a steel trap, and at least half a barrel of flour in bags not too large to be carried by Chickum or me. Chickum brought two jars of butter, another ax, and his bow and arrow. Of course we had our pocket-knives, and Abyssinia had needles and strong thread. The hour came when we only awaited an auspicious occasion for departure.

It had become apparent that not a third of our stores could be removed in a single journey, and, after considering the matter most thoughtfully, I resolved that the only wise course was to determine upon the site for our new home, complete it, and to it carry our goods from time to time. Upon Chickum and me must necessarily fall the burden of this initial labor, and we set about it at once. Our homestead sloped from the roadway to the north and was bounded in that direction by a grassy expanse through which flowed a small creek, crossed by a plank. The creek separated this green area from a wild and comparatively deserted region known as the Wooded Pasture. Some hundreds of yards distant from the creek rose an extremely wide and dense growth of willows, and in the midst of this miniature forest, as we had at one time discovered, was a small open space, dry and bare of growth. Here, after new exploration in company with Chickum, I decided should be established our tranquil home. The site was not discernible from the home of our parents, nor indeed from any part of the place we were leaving except from an elevated point in a meadow to the west, and even from this station the view was indistinct.

We bided our time impatiently now; but

we did not have long to wait. A day came when our parents were away upon a visit, the hired girl was occupied in-doors, and the hired man busy in the cornfield where the dense growth of the valued cereal prevented him from seeing us or being seen. Quietly Chickum and I departed, burdened with the quilts, sheets, our axes, and the ball of twine. Our journey to the willows was uneventful and our labors there were unmolested.

The plan of our shelter had already been designed by me, and we lost no time in trivial debating over details, Chickum submitting without question to each suggestion of the stronger mind. Under my direction we cut down eight small willows as straight as we could find, and cut from each a length of nearly six feet, four of which we sharpened at one end. These, one of us standing upon a dead uprooted stump which we rolled about, we drove into the earth at distances of six feet apart, the stakes, rising some five feet, forming the four corners of a square. The remaining four poles we tied firmly so that they extended from the top of one stake to another, and upon the frame so constructed we stretched one of the sheets, cutting holes close to the hems and through them tying the sheet to the cross-pieces. Our dwelling was now roofed. The four remaining sheets, similarly tied, made the four sides of the structure, one being left partly unattached so that it might be lifted, thus serving for a door. Upon the grassy floor of the house one of the quilts was spread, and there was our Tented Home! Chickum was wild with delight and capered about hilariously, but I reminded him that the time for an exhibition of such exuberance of spirit had not arrived. Much yet remained to be accomplished. Days passed before all our stores were, with exercise of the greatest caution, safely bestowed within the tent.

It was six o'clock one pleasant evening, when we had just finished dinner, that our parents again absented themselves to make a call upon a neighbor. Our time had come. Quietly all of us, including Abyssinia and the twins, slipped down through the kitchen garden, across the creek, across a part of the Wooded Pasture and into the Willow Grove. There was what I may call a certain tremulousness, but no faltering. We reached our place of refuge. "Welcome to this sylvan grove!" shouted Chickum —quoting, I firmly believe, something he had read in a story, for Chickum's ordinary mode of expression was not such as I could in many respect desire—and all entered the tent and made themselves at home. Here were peace and happiness at last! We chatted and planned until darkness fell, and then, digging a hole with my knife into a potato, I inserted one of the candles we had brought and found the place illuminated finely. But we did not remain long awake. It had been a season of labor and excitement, and a sense of drowsiness soon overcame us all.

It was nearly midnight when I was aroused by an exclamation from Abyssinia and the sobbing of the twins. "What is it?" whispered Abyssinia, and as she spoke there came a strange, gulping cry from a marshy strip beside the creek, and then, nearer us, one more musical but quite as mournful. The creatures of the night were calling. From my wider experience I recognized their harmlessness; I knew the voices of the bullfrog and the whippoorwill, but with the others it was different. Though my rest had been disturbed, I could not but explain all graciously, and soon the three were sleeping again, though fitfully. As for Chickum, he had not awakened. When we awoke, morning had come and the birds were chirping all about us. We ate heartily of jam and crackers, and felt the blood coursing in our respective veins as it had never done before. How glorious the sense of freedom!

How unstable, too, are sometimes the happiest of conditions! Little did I imagine that bright morning as I noted idly the performance of a red-hooded woodpecker, *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*, who was eating a long white grub in sections, little, I reiterate, did I imagine that before nightfall all our hopeful plans would be disarranged, and that, like some weakling tribe compelled ever to flee before an encroaching power, we must decide, in self-protection, to risk all the dangers of a wilder home.

It was noon when, looking to the southwest, I perceived far in the distance our hired man working about a stump on the elevated spot in the meadow from which could be obtained the only glimpse of our white home amid the greenery. I have not, I hope, one of those minds ever open to suspicion, but I may say that it is one somewhat more than ordinarily keen in the formation of deductions. Why was the hired man there, chopping about a huge stump which he could not possibly remove unaided? Were we discovered? Could the man have been placed there to exercise a distant surveillance over us? The idea grew upon me, and an apprehension I could scarce explain—an apprehension shared by Abyssinia and Chickum, with whom I at once consulted. Under the circumstances, with me to think was but to act. "Come," I said to Chickum, "there is but one course to pursue. We must face the issue as courageously as we can. Abyssinia and the twins will remain here while you and I must venture farther in search of a place where, no matter what may surround us, our isolation will be complete." To this even the sometimes thoughtless Chickum assented promptly. "I am ready, brother," was his answer. "Let us start at once."

Little preparation was required. We provided ourselves with crackers and dried beef and set forth immediately, I carrying one of the axes and Chickum arming himself with the carving knife.

The country for quite a distance, as we found, was partly bare, though there were occasional small oaks and tangles of hazel and blackberry bushes. As we advanced, though, the trees became taller and grew more closely together, and finally, as we ascended a gradually sloping ridge, we found ourselves in what must have been almost the forest primeval. We knew not what we should discover. The shadows were deep, and the wind made a constant sighing overhead. Descending the ridge upon the other side, and pursuing our course far to the northwest, we emerged at last upon a small open glade through which tumbled a noisy creek and near the centre of which grew a few small elms, four of them, as I noted, forming the angles of a square. We advanced and looked about us. From the glade there was an opening in but one direction, to the northeast, through which could be seen far away part of a hillside field. My heart beat fast. I recognized the advantages of the site at a single glance. "Here," I said, "shall be our home!"

Chickum assented gladly and we took up our long homeward march, reaching the tent in time for the evening meal. We were informed by Abyssinia that the day had been uneventful save that Krag had stooped too closely in examination of a bumblebee upon a clover blossom. One of his eyes was closed, but he appeared in his usual spirits. I have ever admired the wonderful recuperative powers of youth. Abyssinia told us, also, that the twins had devoured one entire pot of our limited supply of jam.

For two days Chickum and I labored in the distant forest upon the erection of our new and more substantial home. Sheets would no longer suffice for roof and walls. We cut strong cross-poles and tied them from tree to tree, and, finding great heaps of hemlock bark cut for the tanneries in a small abandoned clearing some distance from our glade, we brought all that we required of the great slabs and, leaning them against our cross-poles, made sides to the dwelling which promised to be wind and rain proof. The roof was constructed of the same material. We now had a home solid and roomy and offering pleasant contrast to the frail tent amid the willows. Laboriously our stores were carried in repeated journeys over the long route, and three days later all of our little company were contentedly at home in Hemlock Castle, a name suggested by Abyssinia, who declared that, like the people on the Pacific island, we should certainly have names for the objects and localities about us. The open space in the forest was christened Haven Glade, the creek received the title of Skelter Walter, and the deep, wooded land about us was known as Darkland.

We were now most happily established. Our only possible anxiety, and that as yet a light one, related to our food supply, which was gradually diminishing. But we had plenty of flour, and Abyssinia now began making bread.

Thoughtful and far-seeing as I had proved myself in the earlier preparations for our flight, I had forgotten one thing. I shall never cease to reproach myself with not having requested Abyssinia, while we were still under the dominion of our parents, to ingratiate herself with the hired girl and acquire at least some rudimentary idea of the art of breadmaking. As it now appeared, she was, though hopeful, absolutely unacquainted with the manner of preparation of this so generally popular article of food. We elders held a council on the subject and each expressed an idea. Abyssinia thought that to merely mix some of the flour with water and then put the dough in the frying-pan was all that was required for bread. Chickum asserted that he had seen the hired girl mix a little salt in the dough. I, personally, was confident that butter was added. It was resolved to experiment on a small scale, and Abyssinia took up her household duties, I must admit, with bravery.

Some of the flour was mixed with water and salt and a little butter and put into the hot frying-pan. It soon browned upon one side and was then turned over with some difficulty because of its extraordinary adhesiveness. When finally extracted it resembled nothing I had ever seen before, but was certainly baked. It was buttered and we all ate. The food was tenacious in quality and its flavor proved exceedingly novel to us. Chickum, later, complained of pain. But we had no other bread, and after I had reasoned calmly with all upon the merit of resignation, we accepted the situation daily. What a wonderful organ is the human stomach!

I am not exaggerating when I relate that the days now passed with blitheness. To our food was added an almost unlimited supply of wild gooseberries and blackberries, and the mandrake apples were ripening. There were deep pools in Skelter Water, and there, with the hooks my foresight had provided, we caught many of the fish known as the common bullhead, which we wrapped in clay and cast into the open fire. When the clay appeared well hardened, we drew it from the fire, cracked it open, and therein found the fish, cooked to a turn, and even a delicacy when eaten with butter and pepper and salt. How inevitably does intelligence, when in stress, arise to the demands of circumstance!

One day Abyssinia came running in, jubilantly crying: "Bees! Bees! I've found a hive of wild bees! Let us tame them, as the people did on the island, and so have all the honey we can eat!"

This assuredly was glorious news, and we all accompanied Abyssinia to the scene of her discovery. There were the bees and their home. Suspended from the swaying end of a beech bough, hanging so low that it was only four or five feet from the ground, appeared a great oval object which looked as made of grayish paper. There were orifices in the bottom about which the insects were humming in great numbers. They seemed somewhat longer than domesticated bees, and had yellowish rings around their bodies, the difference in appearance from the ordinary honey-gatherer being, I assumed, due to their environment and different mode of life. I at once resolved to secure the hive and bring it to Haven Glade, where it would afford a most desirable addition to our daily fare. I determined that the only way to accomplish this was to come at night when the bees were at rest, cut off the limb above the hive, and so carry it to our home. This was easily accomplished. The end of the limb where it had been cut away was inserted in a hole made through the bark of our rear wall, and there, on the outside, hung the hive for the honey-making.

Some days passed and the bees appeared to be working industriously, no one going very near the suspended hive lest they be disturbed. It chanced, however, that we had one morning an exceedingly early breakfast, and Chickum, who always had a taste for sweets, suggested that, as the bees were not yet astir, he go out, cut a hole in the side of the hive and secure a lump of comb for our delectation. Impelled by curiosity, I followed, observing Chickum's operations from a distance. Chickum, using a pocket knife, cut around a piece about six inches square from the side of the queer hive, then removed to look within for the honey. Never shall I forget what then occurred immediately. How remarkable are some of the traits of the insect world! From the opening that Chickum had made there burst, fairly in his face, a whirling, venomously buzzing cloud of the great bees. He leaped backward and fled along the creek. Very fleet of foot has Chickum always been, and I have never felt it humiliating to be defeated by him in our friendly races, but never before had I seen accomplished, even by him, such an amazing burst of speed. His career, so far as I may infer from pictures I have seen, resembled that of the antelope of the arid wastes, but the bees kept pace with him. With each leap Chickum gave vent to the remarkable cry of "Hep! Hep!" At first I thought him shouting instinctively for help, but it was not that; it was, I have since concluded, but a spasmodic exclamation, the result of his alarm and pain and of his violent physical exertion. I followed, first calling to Abyssinia to bring the twins from the house, for I knew the flight must be a brief one. Suddenly, Chickum, in his desperation, plunged into one of the pools of the creek and sank down until only his nose was visible. That organ, as I could see, received at once most violent attention from the hovering pursuers, but by splashing water Chickum finally drove the bees away and they returned scatteringly to their desecrated home. When Chickum emerged from the creek his appearance was such that had I not been witness to the transformation I could scarcely have identified him. Each eye was closed so that, as he walked, he was compelled to hold the lids of one apart with thumb and finger, and his nose, but for its hue, resembled some monster puff-ball of the fields.

That day our forest home was temporarily abandoned, and when night came I removed the hive with the utmost care a long distance into the forest. Days later I found it abandoned and, examining it, found breeding cells, but not a trace of honey. I recognized at once and, as is always my way, admitted to myself that I had erred. The hive was not that of the wild honey bee, *Apis mellifica*, but of the aggressive tree wasp, *Vespidæ*. I could not understand why I had been so mistaken. I had been most carefully instructed in natural history, and Miss Clitherose, my teacher for several terms, had been kind enough to speak of my remarkable aptitude in that direction. I had acquired not only the common but many of the Latin names of the soulless creatures, and, indeed, rather preferred the Latin. I well remember the day

“A DOZEN OR MORE NESTS WERE FOUND”

when I puzzled even Miss Clitherose, who prided herself somewhat on her acquirements. I asked her to give me the old Latin names for turkey and potato and she failed in the attempt. Little did she comprehend how I had reasoned that as there had been no turkeys nor potatoes in the Old World there could have been no Latin names for them. But I digress.

Time passed and all went well until one afternoon, looking through the one small opening to the glade which gave a view of the distant hillside field, I saw distinctly the form of a man. He was chopping, and something about the figure and its movements reminded me irresistibly of our hired man, Eben Westbrook. What could it mean?

Happy am I to turn to a subject more exhilarating—to a novel incident in our forest life. One day Chickum and the twins went berrying in the direction of our former home, venturing—as we rarely did—even as far as the wooded lot. They were in the midst of the hazel and blackberry bushes when there was a sudden cackle and flutter in the undergrowth, and a cry from Jörgensen which brought Chickum hurriedly to the scene. What he saw caused the impetuous youth to shout with joy. There, beneath a bush, was the nest of a hen, *Gallina Americana*, and in it were no less than seven eggs. Berrying was suspended promptly, and all the eggs save one were transferred to the pail, and then began a wild search for more. It was well rewarded. A dozen or more nests were found, the spoil of which was added to that already secured. It was a great discovery.

A prouder trio than entered Hemlock Castle that evening, bringing their burden of eggs, could not be conceived by any sort of person, nor could any imagine a more enthusiastic reception than was accorded them. Not only were we now relieved from immediate danger of a food famine, but the variation in diet was good for all of us. There was a most riotous consumption of eggs for days, until a startling tendency toward biliousness, exhibited by little Krag, induced me to counsel greater moderation. So many eggs, coupled with Abyssinia's bread, were necessarily trying to the system. It was now that Chickum developed a great idea. He proposed to capture a number of the fowls, bring them to Haven Glade, and there establish a hennery.

The proposition was received with general approbation, and next day the construction of the hennery was begun. It was not a difficult task which faced us. Since the fowls must have gravel and water, it was decided that the hennery should extend a little into the creek, and close beside its sloping bank the structure was erected. There but remained the capture of the fowls, and Chickum was riotous over the prospect. He announced his ability to catch a dozen chickens in a single day, and with the assistance of Krag and Jörgensen he made good his boast, the three running down into the bushes and bringing home just the number of hens he had promised.

Our life continued in its placid way until one night, when a tremendous commotion in the chicken-house caused both Chickum and me to rush out to the rescue. Chickum had seized the carving-knife as usual, and I a handy bludgeon. As we neared the place some dark-colored animal clambered hurriedly up the side of the enclosure, and as its head appeared through a hole in the roof I dealt it a heavy blow and it fell stunned. Chickum descended through an opening in the roof and the animal was put out of its misery. It resembled a miniature bear, save that its color was grayish and that it possessed a long and remarkably ringed tail. I at once recognized the common raccoon, *Procyon lotor*, and made an address to the others upon its many curious traits and habits of life. One of the hens was found killed. A day or two later there entered from the water side an enemy which we saw on two or three occasions but could not destroy nor capture. It proved to be the fur-producing animal known as a mink, *Putorius vison*. Within a week we had not a single fowl alive. All had fallen before the rapacity of this bloodthirsty creature. Hunger stared us in the face!

How nearly am I approaching now to the end of this narrative of trial and adventure! How vividly recall themselves to me the scenes of one fateful afternoon! There had not been a storm since before our occupancy of Hemlock Castle, and almost a drought prevailed throughout the country. But a change was near at hand. There came an afternoon, airless, close and heavy until near evening. Then white clouds appeared in the west, growing rapidly into woolly mountains. Soon these assumed a darker hue, and a great wind arose before which the sturdiest trees were bent, while an awful roar resounded through the forest. A darkness came upon everything, and we huddled in the shelter of Hemlock Castle, even Chickum alarmed, Abyssinia crying, and the twins in an agony of terror. The rain began to fall in such torrents as I had never known before. Now the wind increased almost to a hurricane, and a sudden blast carried away the roof of our house as if it had been a thing of paper. In a moment we were wetted to the skin. The creek became a spreading torrent which swept away the ruins of our house just as we had barely escaped from it. In the darkness we clambered blindly toward the ridge, when I heard a loud shout near us and recognized the voice of Eben Westbrook. Never did human voice sound sweeter! "Hurry!" he shouted, "Hurry home!" and came rushing up to seize the hands of Krag and Jörgensen and take the lead. Wet and bedraggled we hurried on, over the ridge, into the open, across the hazel country, across the Wooded Pasture, across the creek, up through the kitchen garden, and into the house by way of the kitchen door. A fateful moment had arrived.

I felt something in my throat, but I did not shrink. I had decided what I would say. I would naught extenuate, but would fall back upon the theory of the sacredness of human rights. My address was not to receive a hearing.

Our parents were about sitting down to the evening meal, and, to my surprise, our plates lay all in their accustomed places, as if we had not been absent for a day. My father looked up and nodded cheerfully and mother only said: "You'd better all go up and get dry clothes on before you eat." The hired girl peeked in from a side of the kitchen door and drew her head back suddenly with a gulp. Eben Westbrook maintained what I have heard called in relation to others an impassive countenance. We went up, changed our clothes, and all came downstairs together. What a meal it was! There was not much conversation, though father mentioned something about the beginning of the school term. How Krag and Jörgensen did eat! But oh, the incomprehensible apathy of Parents!

CHAPTER XXV

THE LOWRY-TURCK ENTANGLEMENT

The interesting story of "The Swiss Family Robertson" told and the usual comment made, the Colonel, still beaming, turned to the Young Lady.

"Will you please tell us something?" he said.

And her reply to him was very simple and graceful;

"I can at least tell you about the 'Lowry-Turck Entanglement,' for I was familiar with the circumstances." Then she continued:

THE LOWRY-TURCK ENTANGLEMENT

Apropos of the affair of Harvey Lowry and Angeline Turck, as also apropos of many other affairs of similar nature, it is very much to be feared that one of the proverbs is unreliable. "Necessity is the mother of invention" comes off the tongue glibly enough, but why "mother"? What rules the camp, the court, the grove, and what makes the world go around? What but love, and is not Love, when personified, a male? And has he not been the cause of more inventions than have all others combined? Certainly it was he who suggested an invention of the Lowry-Turck love affair. He is Necessity disguised; and he is not a mother.

Of course Love need not grumble. He is no worse off than are other fathers. If a boy becomes famous in the world the fact is attributed to his noble mother; if he becomes infamous, the community says, "Like father, like son"—which is hardly fair. Fathers are useful. Not only did every person who ever invented anything have a father, but without the father romance would be robbed of one of its most useful and steadfast figures. These remarks, prefacing a love story, may be didactic and ponderous and prosy, but they are true.

It is true, as well, that, though this is a love story pure and simple, Mr. Turck, the father in the case, may, in a sense, be looked upon as among the characters who belong to the world of romance, for he was the very personification of one accepted type of parent in love stories, being perverse, tyrannical and hard-hearted, looking upon lovers as the ranchman does on wolves, and resolved to keep his daughter to himself indefinitely. He had a red face, tufts of side whiskers which grew out nearly at right angles, and a bellowing voice which would have made his fortune as skipper of a sailing craft in noisy seas. It was, perhaps, such men as Mr. Turck who brought the father into disrepute before the first romance was written, and there is little doubt, too, that it has been such daughters as Angeline Turck who have innocently aggravated the father's already uncertain temper and thus made his name the byword it has become—in fiction.

Angeline, at the time this affair began, was seventeen, and completely sovereign over the heart of Harvey Lowry—to quote from one of the young gentleman's letters to the young lady herself. They had been in love six months, according to Angeline's computation, seven, according to that of Harvey; but naturally, he had been first to feel and feed the flame. Harvey, though successful in his suit, was not, in personal appearance, the ideal lover for a girl of Angeline's age—that is, he was not tall, nor dark, nor haughty of mien. On the contrary, he was short, fair and round-faced, and had a thoroughly businesslike demeanor. He looked like a young man whose soul was all in the profit on a next shipment of barrel-hoops, or something, when, in truth, he had endless romantic fancies. In his sentiment lay his charm, and it was to this quality that, as she came to know him well, the fair Angeline had completely yielded. There had been a declaration of love and no refusal, but as yet no formal engagement existed. That, it was mutually understood, must come later, the delay being attributable to certain obstacles of a financial nature. Meanwhile the time passed most pleasantly. There were meetings where Harvey said things calculated to touch the heart, and there was much letter-writing. It was this last which wrecked the air-castle.

One evening when Angeline's parents were alone, Mr. Turck startled his wife by demanding suddenly:

"What's that young Lowry coming here so much for? I don't like it!"

Mrs. Turck replied mildly that she supposed Mr. Lowry came chiefly to see Angeline. She saw nothing very wrong in that. He was said to be a steady young man, and, of course, Angeline must have harmless company occasionally.

"I don't care whether he's steady or not. He's coming here too much. Don't tell me anything about 'harmless company!' He's after Angeline, and I won't have it! I'll look into this thing!" And Mr. Turck gave utterance to a sound which may be indifferently described as a determined snort. Mrs. Turck understood it, and looked for trouble of some sort in the near future. She had reason.

The evening before, Harvey, after leaving the house, had kissed Angeline's hand at the garden gate. It had been at this electrical moment that Mr. Turck looked out of the sitting-room window, instead of attending to his newspaper as he should have done, and noted the two forms showing dimly through the gathering shade. He did not distinctly see the kiss, but something in the movement was vaguely reminiscent to him. His suspicions were aroused. He had called harshly to Angeline to come in and go to her mother, and she had obeyed, while Harvey melted away into the summer night, after the manner of lovers who have attracted the paternal eye. Neither of the two was much disturbed. There was a glow in the heart of each, a glow too deep to be affected by an ominous word or two. Yet this episode had led to Mr. Turck's outbreak before his wife.

The first blow fell early. Before two more days had passed Mr. Turck had broken out at the breakfast table and had forbidden Angeline to have any further relations of any sort with Harvey Lowry. She must not speak to him. There were tears and quite a scene. Even the subdued Mrs. Turck ventured to say a word, and asked what Angeline could do when meeting Harvey on the street? To this only the curt reply was given that "a dignified bow" was enough. It was rather hard. The old gentleman did not know it, his meek wife did not suspect it, and Angeline would never have believed it, but the truth is, if Angeline's life had depended on the making of a dignified bow, it would have been short shrift for her. It must be regretfully admitted that in the village of Willow Bend the bow, as practiced by maids alike, was such a casual bob of the head as conveyed not the remotest conception of any dignity. It may have been a fact that this Arcadian bob was subject to modification among the elders, but that does not matter. The father, looking upon Angeline's meek face and recognizing the accustomed submission in his wife's eyes, felt that he had done a fit and becoming morning's work, and drank his coffee calmly, while Angeline trifled sadly with her spoon and looked dumbly out of the nearest window.

That evening Lowry called, and was told by the servant maid who met him at the door that he could not enter. The young man understood well enough that this was under Mr. Turck's direction, and went away less dispirited than he might have been. The next day Mrs. Turck, who feared to do otherwise, brought to the lord of the house a tinted piece of folded paper, which proved to be a letter from Harvey to the again suspiciously rosy Angeline. This dangerous piece of Love's fighting gear had been detected by Mrs. Turck's eagle eye among the trifles on her daughter's work table. A charge direct, tears, expostulations, confession, and the delivery of the missive over to the enemy had followed swiftly. The hair stood upon the paternal head in disapproval as Mr. Turck held the pink letter between his thumb and forefinger and read it stridently aloud. After all, there was little in it to excite either anger or apprehension, for it was only an expression of hope that the writer could see Angeline that evening at a little party at the home of a mutual friend, but, as with venomous insects, its sting was in its tail, for it was signed solely with these three letters: "I. L. Y."

Now, even Mr. Turck did not need to be told what the letters he described as "those infamous characters" signified. The world knows them. His wife, too, flushed when he showed them to her, and then, for once bridling a little at the "infamous," she reminded him that there was a time when Mr. Turck himself, as a matter of custom and daily habit, wrote those very characters at the end of all his letters; but, though for a moment embarrassed by this allusion, the husband only sniffed.

Angeline had a bad half hour over the "I. L. Y.," and the end was submission almost abject, for Mr. Turck would brook no half-way measures. The girl promised neither to write to nor read any letters from the young man so disapproved. In a sharp communication from Mr. Turck, Harvey Lowry was made to know the unpopularity of his epistolary efforts in the Turck household, and for a day or two apparently bowed his head to the paternal will. But who may comprehend the ways of a lover? One morning not a week after the "I. L. Y." affair, Mr. Turck saw another suspicious-looking envelope in the bundle of letters he carried home from the post-office at luncheon time. He looked hard at Angeline's face when she opened the letter at the table and noted there was an expression of confusion and surprise. Without a word, he stretched out an authoritative hand, and, without a word, Angeline gave him the small, open sheet of heavy cream colored paper. This is what he saw, drawn with pen and ink, on the fair page:

Only that and nothing more.

It was now that Angeline's persecutions began in earnest. She was questioned, and threatened, and bullied, and coaxed, but she would not tell the meaning of those four lines drawn upon that virgin page, and sent to her in an envelope addressed in the handwriting of Harvey Lowry. In truth, the poor girl did not know, and could not guess, what the thing meant, herself. Denial tears, supplication—all were of no avail. Mr. Turck would not believe his daughter. He held the drawing upside down, sideways, and then almost horizontal, as one does in reading where the letters are purposely made tall and thin, but he could make nothing of it, and raged the more at his incompetence. "It looks a little like a side plan of a room," he muttered to himself, "but it isn't complete. Have the fools arranged to run away and are they planning a house already?" The idea was too much for him. He seized his hat and went forth for advice.

Mr. Turck was in the office of Baldison, a contractor and builder, within five minutes. "Here, Baldison," he bellowed as he came in, "what is this? Is it part of a plan of a house, or, if not, what is it?"

Mr. Baldison was a cautious man, and, taking the paper, he examined the connected lines long and deliberately. His comment, when he made it, was not entirely satisfying.

"It might be part of a side plan of one story," he said, "but it ain't finished. There's only one brace in, and the cross beam is lacking. If it wasn't for the left-hand upright, I should say it was part of a swing-crane, but the pulley isn't strung. I don't know what it is. Who made it?"

But Mr. Turck did not go into particulars. He left Baldison's place and studied out the problem in his own office; he went out again and asked in vain the opinion of a dozen men, and he went home that evening baffled and in a frame of mind of which the less said the better. Within twenty-four hours Angeline was packed off to the Misses Cutlet's boarding-school in distant Belleville, to be "finished," as her mother described it. The irate father used other and far less becoming words.

This shifting of the scene when, to her, so much of importance was involved, was a most serious thing to Angeline. But it might have been much worse than it proved at the school. Plump Bessey Payton, another girl from Willow Bend, was there, and it was easily so arranged that the two occupied adjoining rooms. They had been friends for years, and the renewed companionship was much for Angeline. It aided in partial distraction.

And now this story, which has been—from an ordinary point of view—little more than a comedy, develops into something very like a tragedy. It was so to a young girl, at least. The Misses Cutlet had been instructed to keep a sharp eye open, and report, as well as they might, upon the quantity of Angeline's correspondence. They had little to tell. Angeline received few letters, and none frequently from any one person, so far as could be learned from the envelopes addressed to her. The parents were content.

And Angeline really had no correspondence with Harvey Lowry. She was a young woman who would keep her word, and she did not write to him, while from him came no message save an occasional envelope containing only a slip of paper upon which appeared the mysterious symbol. But was not that enough? Did it not indicate that she was still in his heart, and that he would be always hers? Those lines must have a meaning, and though she could not translate them, she felt it was only because Harvey had forgotten that he had never given her the key. What of that? She knew instinctively that the story they told was one of faith and faithfulness. How delicate of him, and how thoughtful that such loving reminder should come at times, and how wonderful it was that he should have invented such a thing for her dear sake alone! Her love grew with the months, and so, unfortunately, despite the letters with the reassuring figure, did her unhappiness.

It is perhaps unreasonable that we should laugh at the loves of the young, at what we call "calf love" in the male, and a "schoolgirl's fancy" in the maiden, for the springs of the heart do not always deepen with the years. Well for youth is it that it owns such wonderfully recuperative forces of mind and body; sad would it be to the elders if, without such recuperative powers, their feelings were given such abandonment. Youth's hurts are sometimes serious. Angeline was growing from the subjugated girl into the suffering woman. Other young women, she reasoned, were allowed to love and to marry the men of their choice. Why should she be made so cruel an exception? She idealized the absent, as the loving, so often do. In her mind, Harvey Lowry had grown from one for whom she cared more than for others into a hero without a flaw, one thoughtful, considerate, self-denying and altogether noble. The sentimental vein in her nature broadened and deepened, and she placed a greater value on the sweet reminder of the mysterious figures in the letters. And all for her! How constant he was, and how hard the lot of both of them! She became feverish and impatient. Her studies lost all interest, her cheeks became paler, thinner, her manner more languid. It could not last.

So the months went by until the end of the scholastic year was close at hand. Angeline would soon be in Willow Bend again and with her parents. She would meet Harvey Lowry again—that was inevitable. What would the near vacation bring to her? she asked herself.

She was growing stubborn now. The portentous figure of her father no longer loomed so highly in her eyes as formerly, and she was the decided woman, with a woman's heart and will, and a woman's rights. What might be the summer's history!

Accidents—as thoughtful people are much given to remark—have sometimes great effect on the affairs of human beings.

One day as Angeline, visiting her friend, stood looking at her still agreeable image in Bess' mirror, she saw, stuck in the frame, among cards, notes and photographs, a square of yellowish paper. The coloring seemed to have come from age, but of that Angeline made no note. All she saw or knew was that the paper bore this mystic sign upon it:

For a moment or two the girl stood motionless. Power of speech and movement were gone. Then, "Bess," she called tremblingly; "what is this?" and she held out the paper for inspection.

"That? Oh, that is from Harvey Lowry," said Bess composedly.

"But, oh, Bess," cried the girl excitedly, "what does it mean?"

"Can't you guess?" was the reply.

"No, I can't," was the slow answer, "and—and I've seen it before."

The careless Bess was aroused now, and there was a flash in her black eyes. "How dare Harvey Lowry have sent one of those to any one else?" she broke out impetuously, but her excitement was only momentary. She began to laugh. "Well, it was a good while ago, after all." And so her anger vanished.

Angeline was recovering herself, though with an effort. "But tell me—tell me what it means," she demanded.

"Why, you stupid girl!" was the reply. "I guessed it in the first ten minutes—and once we signed all our letters with it. Now, see here," and she took paper and pencil and drew a perpendicular mark, thus: |

"That is 'I' isn't it? Well then, I'll put on this mark," and she added a line horizontally, making this figure: └

"That's an 'L' you see. Next, to make your 'Y,' you put on this"—she made two added marks—"and you have this: ⍂

"There's your 'I. L. Y.' sign!"

Angeline was stunned. Never was a dream

dispelled so suddenly and harshly. Not for her had that mystic figure been devised, but for another, and it had been utilized a second time, as if there were no sacredness to such things! It mattered not how much Harvey Lowry might be interested in her now, she was but a sort of second-hand girl. Anger took the place of her unhappiness. "Delicate and thoughtful," indeed! To send those reassuring notes to her was now but a cheap impertinence! She had been accustomed, in her pity of herself, to quote something from Shakespeare which seemed to her to have a peculiarly sad and fitting application: "Not poppy, nor mandragora, nor all the drowsy syrups of the world, shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep which thou owed'st yesterday!"

Here were poppy and mandragora and syrups enough, all administered in one rude prescription, as to the efficacy of which there could be no shadow of a doubt!

Somehow the brooding and disappointed woman seemed to melt away now, and there reappeared the impulsive girl again. It was an angry girl, though. Her first grief over—and it lasted but for a day—she resolved upon an epistolary feat of her own. She wrote three letters. The first was to Harvey Lowry. It was not quite, but nearly, as school-girlish as she might have written a year earlier, being distinctly of the " 'tis better thus" variety and "coldly dissecting," as she afterwards said in confidence to a bosom friend. In it she bade her admirer an eternal farewell, notwithstanding the fact that they must inevitably see each other every day in the week as soon as she returned to Willow Bend. This labored epistle she placed in another, of a meek and lowly tenor, to her father. Both of these she inclosed in a letter to her mother.

It is needless to say that upon receipt of these letters in Willow Bend the Turck family fairly glowed. The old gentleman sent Angeline's letter to Harvey, accompanied by a stiff one of his own, and sent to Belleville a substantial addition to his daughter's quarterly allowance.

As to Harvey Lowry, who has been much neglected, his own story deserves some attention now. When he had read the two letters he was a most perplexed young man. It had never occurred to him that to use his "I. L. Y." device a second time, or rather with a second girl, was anything out of the way, for, with all his sentiment, Harvey was not insistent upon the finer shadings in the affairs of life, even when appertaining to the heart. He had really cared for Angeline, but he did not become a soured and disappointed man. Despite the "dissecting" letter, he and Angeline often met and spoke in later times, and when, finally, she married, and married well, there was none more gratified than he. Time tells in the village as much as it does elsewhere. Nothing could extract quite all the romance from the ingenious Harvey. After fluttering around the village beauties for a time he ended by marrying a sweet-tempered, freckled country girl, with whom he lives in great content in a small house, crowded now with jolly, freckled boys and girls. And here comes relation of something which shows how hard it is to eliminate the once implanted sentimental tendency. To this day, when the father of the freckled family has occasion to write to the mother, he invariably signs his letters: ⍂

CHAPTER XXVI

THE PALE PEACOCK AND THE PURPLE HERRING

The Young Lady was much applauded. Colonel Livingstone looked into Stafford's eyes, and was hesitant. Yet he still had something of the old masterly way about him, and he spoke out openly and very frankly. There is something about the United States army officer that is worth while. He rose to the occasion. The manner in which he rose to it was worthy of his occupation and rank. He said:

"You have done things, my boy. You have bossed this train. You have brought to us a great engineering and overbearing quality."

And the Colonel almost blushed in an affectionate sort of lapse. "And yet it may be that you expect to get away from me, Mr. Stafford. You have got to tell your own story before we escape from here through this soon to be open road that you have largely made for us. Tell us the story, Mr. Stafford."

There are times when a strong man may be crushed, but it is rarely, save by thought of a a woman. Stafford looked slantwise up the aisle, and then with a look that was tell-tale in his eyes as he cast them toward Her, where she was sitting three or four seats away. He told the story of

THE PALE PEACOCK AND THE PURPLE HERRING

This is not really more the story of the Pale Peacock and the Purple Herring than it is of John and Agnes, but that does not matter much, for the first account encompasses the second, in a way. What is chiefly curious is the difference, in point of view, between the Peacock and Herring, and the other two.

Once there was a peacock. Never before was so beautiful a peacock as she. She was snow-white except as to her head and tail. Her appearance was something wonderful. From her head down to her shoulders the hues blended and flashed in iridescent green. Whenever she moved herself in the slightest degree there appeared a lighting in color passionately vivid. From about her neck and breast there shone what is known as a lambent flame which at times became tempestuous. So the neck and shoulders melted into the snow-white of the body, a restless glimmering ebbing into a milky way. It was just so with the tail.

Well, this peacock was unlike other peacocks. She was not—eh?—she was not morbid, but she was solitary and reflective and intensely emotional and sentimental. Of course she had two feet and had a voice, but the less said of them the better. She would wander up and down by the lakeside and think of all that might be. She scarcely dreamed that there was to come to her what was her secret heart's desire, but in time it came. She met the Purple Herring. With each of them it was a case of infatuation at first sight.

Now the Purple Herring was almost as much of an exceptional case as the Pale Peacock. He was the only purple herring in all the great lakes, and was practically the King of the Herrings, and was respected as such. Personally, he had in his nature many of the traits of the Pale Peacock. He, too, was emotional, faithful, and impassioned. They loved.

Here was a most unfortunate situation. Naturally, the purple Herring could not get along very well upon the land, and, naturally too, the Peacock could not flourish in the water. It was not exactly a case of Platonic love; it was a case of hopeless love, in a way, and yet, not altogether hopeless, for they were happy. It came to this, that they made the best of things, and that the Peacock, day after day, would wander along upon the sands which the water lapped, while the Herring would swim along beside her, and they would exchange tender confidences, and that, to amuse her, he would tell her tales, many tales, of the wonders of the vasty deep of the lake. He told her why the fish flies came in autumn and smeared the windows and made slippery the sidewalks of the great city; of how they lay in the mud at the bottom of the lake, like little short sticks, and then finally burst open and came to the surface and floated away into town. He told her of his talk with Mrs. Whitefish, and of how she did not think the spawn was getting along as well as usual. He told her of a thousand things, and they were happy.

They often talked too, this united yet effectually separated pair, of what they saw upon the shores of the placid lake, whose creamy sands, outside the city, sloped down to the water's edge from green fields and waving groves.

Many people walked along the sands, and children played and romped there all day. At sunset the Purple Herring began to look with special interest for the lovers who came in pairs and sat until late, talking, and sometimes in blissful silence while they listened to the soft lapping of the waves upon the shore.

One day the Purple Herring told the Pale Peacock about one of these pairs of lovers, the only pair, he said, which were not happy.

"And I can't imagine why they are not, either," said the Purple Herring.

"Nor can I, although I have not yet heard all you know about them," said the Pale Peacock. "How two lovers who may live together forever, who are not kept from each other by such a fate as separates you and me—how men and women who love each other can be unhappy, is more than I can conjure up by any stretch of fancy!"

"Her name is Agnes," began the Purple Herring, "and when I first saw her she was walking slowly along the shore, back and forth, on a stretch of beach bordering the great park at the head of the lake. The sky was red after sunset, and in the southwest hung the new moon, with a great star over it. She was a beautiful lady, but she looked perplexed and a little sad even on that first evening. I did not notice the perplexity and sorrow on her sweet face at the time, but afterward I remembered it.

"Suddenly her face was all lighted up by some light that was not of the western sky, nor of the little bent moon, nor the great star. Her eyes shone, her cheeks became pink like the inside of a pink shell, and I looked where her eyes were turned. I saw a man walking rapidly toward her, and I thought, 'Only another pair of lovers!'

"But this was no common pair; I could not leave them, they were so strangely attractive. Their voices thrilled me as I heard them. I could feel all around the vibrations of deep emotion, electrical, disturbing, and enchanting. The lady began their conversation:

" 'The day has been so long!' she said. 'And our time together is so short!' the man replied.

"They did not touch each other. They did not even take each other's hands. They only walked slowly along the shore, side by side, yet I and all the world had but to see them to know that they were lovers.

" 'Agnes,' the man said, 'how happy the men and women are who have a home together! I would not care how humble the roof was that sheltered you and me. How glad I would be to work for you, to plan, and in every way live for you—even now I live only for you!—but what a joy it would be if it could all be with you!'

" 'Do not speak of it, John,' the woman said, and her voice trembled.

" 'How many there are,' the man continued, passionately, 'how many there are who are chained together, straining both at the chain! They would be free, and cannot. Their dwelling-place is no home. They fret and sting each other, while you and I—"

" 'John!' the lady interrupted him.

" 'Forgive me!' he said, his tone suddenly changing. 'I can see you but for a few minutes, and I proceed to make you miserable! Forgive me! Tell me about yourself—what you are thinking, what you are reading. Has the white rose blossomed in your garden? How is my friend Rex, and why didn't you bring him with you?'

"She answered first about the dog, Rex, and then their talk grew uninteresting, or it grew late, so that I became sleepy; I don't know which, but soon they parted, and, would you believe it? the man didn't even kiss her once, nor touch her hand!

"I saw this strange couple many times again during that clear bright June weather, and sometimes I heard their talk. There was always something about it that made me think of heatlightning, with a mystery of earnestness even in their light banter and play of talk.

"You must have observed that these human creatures often mean things they do not say, and yet contrive that the sense shall show through their misleading words. These two often talked lightly and laughed together, but there was ever an undercurrent of feeling of such deepness and power as I could not comprehend; its mystery almost irritated me.

"One day—it was at night—not a living soul was to be seen on the sands as the two came walking toward me. They came swiftly as if they would walk into the water, but stopped there at its edge—and I listened, fascinated by their tense faces, and deep low voices.

" 'We must do what is right,' the man was saying. 'Honor binds you, and it binds me. We must not play with fire. I have taken the step which parts us.'

" 'So soon!' said she.

" 'None too soon!' the man protested. Then he burst out, as if he could not keep what came like a torrent from his lips.

" 'Help me! help me! We must decide and act together! I cannot leave you without your help!'

"The lady turned her face from him for a moment. She looked away across the water, and the tears which had started to her eyes seemed as if commanded not to fall. Pale she was, pale was her face, and with the look of ice with snow upon it. Her voice, when she turned to him again, did not seem like her voice—the sound of it made him start.

" 'You are right,' she said, 'Good-bye. God bless you!'

" 'Agnes!' the man cried, as she turned away.

" 'Go,' she answered.

"The man looked at her as if to fix her image upon his soul forever, and said, repeating her words: 'Good-bye, God bless you!'

"Then he walked quickly off into the park, and away, never looking back. The lady sank down on a seat by the water's edge. For a long time I watched her and she did not move. When, finally, she arose and walked away, I felt that I was seeing her, and I also had seen the man, for the last time. And so it was. I have watched for them in vain. The man has gone to the ends of the earth. That I know by the look on his face and hers. She will never see him again, nor will she walk by these waters where she used to walk with him. But why? That is what puzzles me!"

"What fools these mortals be!" said the Pale Peacock, without the least idea that any one else had ever before made that remark.

Pale Death with even tread knocks at the threshold of rich and poor. "Pallida mors æquam pulsat," etc. One day the Purple Herring died, and the Pale Peacock suffered as suffer those who love and are bereaved. Little cared she for longer life, and she wanted to pine away. She went to a policeman on the corner, and said: "Tell me how to pine."

"What now! What now!" said the policeman and he gave her no assistance.

But she must pine. She wanted to pine away. She wandered on and met the Cream-Colored Cat, and to her she told her tale. Now, the Cream-Colored Cat had herself learned to pine, having lost her loving mistress, and, being of an affable and affectionate nature, she at once revealed the secret of pining to the Pale Peacock, and they joined forces and pined together. And they pined, and they pined, and they pined. They pined until they became a Sublimated Substance—(just what a Sublimated Substance is does not matter in this story)—and they pined along until they became something so intangible they were almost like a little fog; that is, they were like a young fog, for as a fog gets older and begins to dissipate, it gets thinner, so that the younger a fog is, the thicker it is. Finally it becomes a vapor. And they became what may be called an Evanescent Vapor, until all was lost in the Empyrean. And the souls of the Pale Peacock and the Purple Herring were at last commingled.

Perhaps it was so in the end with the souls of John and Agnes.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE RELEASE

As Stafford concluded his fanciful, dreamy but, seemingly, from his manner, most earnest story, the Far Away Lady gave him a single appealing glance and then arose and departed for her own car. As she passed he saw that there were tears in her eyes. They did not speak nor did they meet again that day, but he was resolved to breakfast with her in the morning.

Morning opened brilliantly and as he entered the dining car, at the time he knew she would be there, he saw that the sun which had but just climbed lazily above the mountain tops, was engaged in the task of gilding her hair. He advanced with more courage than he had on the first occasion.

"Good morning, the world is in a good humor to-day, is it not," was his comment as he took his seat. "Have you noticed that the sun, whose business it is to indicate the world's moods, has leaped through the window and is playing with your head when he isn't dancing on the table-cloth?"

She looked up smilingly, but before she could answer, there came an interruption. The door of the car opened and there stalked up to them the big conductor, owner of the stubby red moustache, with a look in his eyes which indicated that he had swift remarks to make. He broke out promptly: "Mr. Stafford, you are wanted at the wire, and, you bet, there's something doing."

Pleasant to the looker-on, as to them, are the relations and understandings regarding the little side issues and incidents of life between a man and woman of intelligence and education when they are in love with each other, even though that love must be repressed and unexpressed. The interjection of the conductor was delightful to the woman in this case, because it was an involuntary compliment to the man opposite her at the table. It was the breaking in of a fine hireling upon the man of brains and accomplishments, the call upon him for aid in this time of casual need. Stafford's heart danced as he caught the look, because he recognized its full significance.

And then as he rose he grinned, because he saw that the conductor was evidently in trouble. His face indicated that. There was one appreciative look into the face of the smiling woman and then he went out to deal as he might with the existing condition of affairs. He rather enjoyed these frequent interviews with the coming saviors. They had a smart operator at the other end of the wire and, as he had learned, the boss of the rescuing train was assuredly a railroad man of might and much acuteness. They had, as already told, indulged in a verbal brush or two. Connection was made and the first thing Stafford got was:

"Can't you chumps do anything over there?"

"Do anything!" was Stafford's reply. "Do anything! We are a dead train, lying helpless, with our nose stuck into four hundred thousand million feet of packed snow! What are you doing, yourselves, with all the engines you want and a snow-plow, and all the men you want? It strikes me that as butters-in you are about the worst existing."

And then from the boss of the rescuing train Stafford listened to clicked language the recollection of which was ever afterward among the delights of his life. It referred to his personal character and to his ancestry and to a large variety of things besides. It was an admirable effort, an oration trimmed with red exclusively.

And Stafford, understanding that something would, naturally, be expected of him in return, cut loose with his own store of expletives. His four years' absence from the country had left him somewhat deficient in modern Americanisms, but, during that time, as became a man handling lazy coolies, he had acquired a stock of Orientalisms that were not altogether without merit, and these he launched at the gentleman with whom he was engaged in conversation.

Evidently the man at the other end was delighted, for this was his reply:

"I don't know who you are who appear to be running things over there, but you seem to have some stuff in you."

"That's all right," said Stafford, "but we've got some curiosity over here. What have you got for a snow-plow, anyhow—a mowing-machine, or a reaper?"

"We'll show you, my child! Oh, we'll show you! And I've got some mighty good news for you. Things are doing. We've thrown away the trinket we've been trying to use, because we've just got a new snow-plow from the East. She's a monster, and a beauty of the new style. Why, she just lives on snow—wants a mountain of it for breakfast, two for dinner, another for supper, throws away what she doesn't eat, and throws it a mile! She's eating her way toward you now, and she's eating mighty fast. She was hungrier than usual to-day. Watch our smoke, that is if you can see it above the snow she throws, and we're making lots of smoke, too. We'll save your sinful bodies, if we can't your souls, this very day. Get ready for moving. We'll be with you somewhere between one and four o'clock. Good-by."

Stafford gave a whoop—he couldn't help it—and imparted the good news to those about him. In no time it was all over the train, and then, to the accompaniment of satisfied exclamations, there was bustle and a gathering together of things everywhere, for during the long wait there had been much scattering of personal belongings. This was a business soon accomplished, to be followed by a period of excited waiting.

It was almost precisely three o'clock when the prisoners, listening like those at Lucknow, heard, faint and far beyond the snowdrifts, something like the piper's blast. It was the distant triumphant whoop of a locomotive. Nearer and more loudly it approached and, presently, in the distance, could be perceived dimly a column of smoke. The advance was not rapid, as a matter of course, but neither was it very slow, and, at last, the whooping monster was in sight, or, rather, not the monster itself, but a cloud of smoke in front of which, swirling, and dense, was a roaring snowstorm. The end was nearly reached. The relief train, its engineers still overworking their whistles, came on, the snow-plow still doing its fierce work, until the two trains stood there close together, the nozzle of the locomotive resting against the snow-plow lovingly.

There was a scramble of people from the train so long imprisoned as there was also from the rescuing train, and there followed a general time of hand-shaking and congratulation. Stafford had the pleasure of meeting the train boss with whom he had been talking in the morning, and took a fancy to that rugged and accomplished civil engineer and railroad man at once, as evidently did the other man to him. Then came business. The boss explained the situation:

"You are in our way. We have work to do in behind you, and we can't pass you. We've got to get you back to the siding, about ten miles from here. We'll have to haul you, I suppose. Have you any coal?"

"Not ten pounds," was the answer of the engineer of the rescued train. "Used it all up, and mighty carefully, too, for heat. Been using bushes for wood. Another day and there'd have been trouble. Lucky it hasn't been very cold."

"Yes, we expected that, and can supply you. We've a flat car load along. We'll haul you back to the siding and get the coal on there. It's the only way."

The coupling was made, the slow retreat of the rescuing train to the siding, taking over an hour, accomplished, as was the transfer of coal and water, with great difficulty and much work of trainmen, and, at last, the train from San Francisco was itself again. It moved forward, its passengers cheering the train on the side track which was also pulling out, but toward the West. The episode was over. Upon the rear platform of the last car as the train drew eastward stood, all alone, the big blonde porter.

The train was whirling toward Denver.

There was a great reunion after supper, presided over by Colonel Livingston, of course, to celebrate, as the Young Lady expressed it, their providential escape from the largest island of Juan Fernandez in the world, but the Far Away Lady was not present. Stafford wondered, and was restless and disappointed. As time wore on, he could not endure it very well, and, withdrawing quietly, went forward to her car, adjoining. What he saw as he entered—and the sight gladdened him, for he feared that she had retired—was the lady sitting alone by the window, still, and apparently dreaming. He advanced and seated himself beside her. She looked at him and smiled, but said nothing.

"Why are you not in the Cassowary with all the rest?" he asked. "They are rejoicing."

She made no answer to his question: "I hope you are happy, John," she said gently. "I heard of your marriage to the American girl at the legation in St. Petersburg, and I prayed that"—but she never finished the sentence.

"Wh-a-t!" gasped Stafford, "Married! I—What the—" —and he almost forgot himself, this man fresh from handling coolies—then more gently and most sadly: "Agnes, you should have known better! Oh, you should have known better! There was a Stafford married there, it is true, a relation of mine, a cousin. It was through him I made my Russian connection—but, Agnes, how could you! Did you think there was room in my heart for another woman, and so soon? But women are strange creatures," he concluded bitterly.

She could not answer him at first, though the light which came into her face should have represented courage; she could but murmur brokenly:

"Forgive me. You must do that—but, oh, John, what could I think? It all seemed so assured. And I was half insane, and doubting all the world. And now, now you have made me very happy. I cannot tell you"—and she failed, weakly, for words.

Every thought and impulse of the man changed on the moment. A great wave of tenderness swept over him:

"Forgive you? Of course I do," he said impetuously, "I can understand. Poor girl, you must have suffered. Who wouldn't at the unveiling of such a man?" Then came the more regardful thought:

"WE SHALL MEET AT BREAKFAST"

"But how is it with you, Agnes? Is life as black as ever?"

"My husband died two years ago," she barely whispered.

The eyes of those who have been long imprisoned cannot, at first, when freedom comes, see in the ordinary light of day, much less when it is glorious sunlight, and it was some moments before the souls' eyes of these two became accustomed to its splendor. Even then, no word was said. They were alone. He but gathered her closely in his arms and kissed her without stint. He had been starving long enough. So he held her for a time and, when he released her and spoke at last, it was but to say in a voice by no means modulated:

"Agnes, I cannot talk, and you know why. I am going away now. We shall meet at breakfast. I but thank God."

And so he left her.

CHAPTER XXVIII

LOVE'S INSOLENCE

The easy impudence, the loving insolence, the large, feudal lord air of proprietorship, of the man who has just come into possession of the one woman is sometimes a development beyond belief. Reprehensible, certainly.

Stafford had not slept much. All night he had lain awake, trying to realize what it was that had come to him, the beneficence of Providence, the magnitude of what earth has sometimes to give. It was only with dawn that he slept at all, and his dreams were good. As for her, the Far Away Lady, who shall tell what thoughts or dreams were hers?

He came into the dining car that morning, refreshed and exalted, and overlooking and sweeping as an eagle in his first morning swing from his eyrie. He was splendidly intolerable, this triumphant lover who had recovered his equipoise and was himself of the years ago. Any lofty simile would do for him. He came stalking in like a king to a coronation, with but one redeeming feature to the look upon his face, an expression which resembled gratitude. And who was it that entered the car a moment or two after he had seated himself at the breakfast table? Could this flush-faced, slender creature, bright and almost challenging of eye, be the Far Away Lady, she of the sad and dreamy look! It was she, certainly. Dr. Love, you are a wonder! All the other physicians of the world, all the health resorts of the world, can neither advise nor have effect toward swift recuperation in comparison with you unhampered! They are but as vapors, or as the things which are not.

The greetings of the morning were exchanged —it was nearly noon, by the way, for they had lain long at Denver—the breakfast was ordered and then he leaned back and looked in her face, smilingly: "Where shall we live?" he asked blandly, as if it were but a resumed conversation. "Have you fallen in love with lotus-eating in Southern California, or are there other regions, still?"

Did my lady lately, so "sober, steadfast and demure," blanche or start at this daring, overbearing opening? Not she. She may have blushed a little, but well she knew the ways of her whimsical, perplexing lover. Her eyes flashed back at his with the tender, quizzical look in them and she laughed. Then a soberer expression came, and she spoke earnestly and thoughtfully:

"I have heard homesick people, living among the oranges, speak longingly of a place they called 'God's country.' I think we should make our home somewhere in 'God's country,' do you not?"

"Yes, dear," he exclaimed delightedly, "but where and what is 'God's country?' We hear about it, but its boundaries seem undefined. I take it that each individual has his or her ideal. I am confident, though, that ours are the same. Is not that so?"

"To me," she spoke bravely, " 'God's country' is, first of all, where you are, and," she added reverently, "of course God is everywhere."

"Bless you," he said, "but, go on. Let us consider what we two think the essentials for our own 'God's country.' "

"It must be a country where the grass grows, where sod, turf, close-woven grass, cover the ground," she answered promptly. "The raw, unkempt plains and hills of the arid regions are not for us, nor is the stormless life of the land of oranges and grapes. We want, first of all, the good green sod, and, next, trees, waving, luxuriant elms and oaks and ash and beech and all their kindred, and their vines as well, wild grapes and ivy and bitter-sweet."

He smiled. "You have begun with the command in Genesis, instructing the Earth to bear, and so on, but I should go one step back in the epic of Creation and say, let us live by the waters where they are 'gathered together unto one place.' We must have a great body of water near us and, we must have rain."

"Yes, in summer, rain; in winter, snow. I want the four seasons."

"I don't know where we are to find four, that is an absolutely complete four," he said. "We can rarely boast a spring in its entirety. It seems to exist only in the dreams of the poets, or in England. I saw a real spring in England. But there are some pretty fair imitations of it, I'll admit, in many of our states, notably, for instance, in Michigan and Wisconsin." Adroit, time-serving man!

"Well, we can get along without an elaborate spring," she laughed, "if we can have a June, a real June, once a year."

And so they considered deliciously until it was decided that "God's country" for them, implied a green country in summer and a white country in winter, with vast water near, if possible, and that from Maine to the Western Mountains it existed, all without prejudice to other "God's countries" for other mortals elsewhere born.

Straightforward, reckless, trusting confidence, was it not, this conversation between the man and woman thus rejoined, but he was of the sort who do things, and she was a woman given fully. Besides—though in a world which ended —they had dreamed before.

This matter of great importance settled, there was silence for a time. He looked upon her with devouring eyes. At last he broke forth:

"Now I want to draw my breath, but find it difficult. I am going to lean back and study you and try to think of the world as it has rearranged itself. I have not grasped it all yet. It is odd; it is great! I have you and you can't get away from me now! It is wonderful, this sudden possession, the possession rightly, even in all the conventional, in all that the weakling centuries dictate. No wonder that I am dazed. Ever as the world revolves, come new revelations of thought and of all existence. I dreamed that I knew things, but I didn't.

"What are you going to do about it, dearie? My heart is like a kettle in which everything is boiling, and it is foaming over the top with love for you. Can you not help me? What are you going to put into the kettle to stop this unseemly boiling? I don't want you to pour in cold water, or take the kettle off, or put the fire out. Oh, well, let 'er boil! I am afraid, my dear, that you will have to take care of me most of the time. I'm irresponsible.

"Let us talk about something practical, my dear woman," he rambled on. "You look at me with your great eyes, and you know what the inevitable is. You know that you and I must face the world and all its dragons together after this. What fun it will be! Have you any suggestions to make? By the way, I like the trick of the top of your garments, the arrangement about your throat. You have tact and taste, and sense, my dear, yet you lack a mountain of judgment and discretion. You have intrusted yourself to me, reckless person! Now, cut loose and tell me something. I think that expression 'cut loose' is one of the best of all our Americanisms. Tell me something."

What could the woman say? She was puzzled over this wild, fumbling-thoughted lover, with his commingled gleams of fact and fancy. But ever to the more admirable of the sexes comes divination. There came into this gentle woman's mind a sudden radiance of comprehension. She knew what he was seeking. He wanted her, with all the selfishness of love, to be foolish with him. And this is what she said:

"I don't know. I only know what I think of his heart and soul, of the resources and qualities of one man in the world and that I am but the dependent woman—and I am most content, dear."

Then she became more venturesome and spoke more definitely and practically, as she knew he wished her to. She looked him squarely in the eyes:

"Make that place for us across the lake, the place of which we dreamed. Never mind now about the town house. That will take care of itself, but the dream place, the 'Shack,' will not. When you were working with your coolies in another hemisphere I hope and believe you had your dreams about me, hopeless as they may have seemed. I want to tell you, great heart, that men do not dream all the dreams. Is it unwomanly, is it not just to you and as it should be that I should say to you now that the woman in America"—and her voice was tremulous—"was dreaming quite as constantly and sadly as the man upon the Russian steppes."

She was looking at him steadfastly and in her eyes were tears and the light which gleams only when the dearest of all fires is burning, a light reflected and intensified, if that were possible, in the eyes of him who was leaning silently forward and hardly breathing. She had gratified his wish. She had "cut loose."

They looked out upon the Kansas prairie, across which the train was scurrying. There were occasional houses, far apart, but the notable objects of the landscape were gaunt windmills which in midsummer drew water for the herds of cattle which even at this season could be seen huddled, more or less comfortably, here and there. The wind had swept bare great patches of pasture land and some of the cattle were browsing contentedly upon the dried grass left in autumn. There were many herds of them but the simile of "cattle on a thousand hills" did not apply, for there were no hills. The travelers looked out upon what was but an illimitable white blanket, with dots upon it.

They looked upon a great country, but it was not for them.

They left the dining car and visited the Cassowary, where were still assembled a number of the group for whom through the days of imprisonment the luxurious sleeper had been a gathering-place, but they did not linger there. They sought the sleeping-car of the Far Away Lady where they lingered until night fell, for what they had said to each other was only the beginning. They had much to tell, and when Stafford slept that night there came to him no vexing or distempered dreams. He had come to a full realization of his new world and all its points of compass. To this strong, almost turbulent character a great peace and content had come. Though he was lying in the berth of a sleeping car there were in his ears, vague and incomplete words of the hackneyed but pleasant benediction:

"Sleep sweet within this quiet room, * * * whoe'er thou art, * * * no mournful yesterdays * * * disturb thy heart."

CHAPTER XXIX

AT LAST

Stafford waited for the Far Away Lady in the morning—she was to come to breakfast at ten o'clock—and met her as she entered the Cassowary. They went into the dining car together, and, as they seated themselves, she noted the added buoyancy of his look and was prepared for anything. The breakfast ordered, he leaned back and asked complacently:

"What do you think of clocks?"

The Far Away Lady looked at him in mild amazement: "Are you not a trifle vague?" she asked. "Is not that like what I have heard you call too much of a 'general proposition'? How can I answer you when I do not know what you mean?"

"Oh, well, maybe it was only a sort of 'general proposition,' but it was in earnest. This, my dear, is an important subject. They have clocks in houses, do they not? Now, it so happens that I am mightily interested in a home and, so, am necessarily interested in clocks. This home is not yet made, but it is as sure as anything within man's mortal scope may be, and clocks are part of the general theme. My dear lady, help me out."

She looked upon him indulgently in his lunacy. She understood, as she had the day before, though now the understanding was simple, since she had the key to his mood. Besides, even in the exuberance of his feelings, he was apparently, not quite so royally driveling, as on the occasion of his first outbreak. Her look grew almost motherly as he checked himself suddenly and informed her that he was pinching his arm to be sure that everything was true.

"Yes," he continued, "there is a great deal to clocks. They are wonderfully cheering and companionable. Their ticking, after a little, never annoys you, and you somehow, come to really need it and to feel a loss when the clock is stopped. It is, in a way, like the sound of the cricket on the hearth. While it is ticking you feel as if you had something alive and friendly about you."

"I like clocks, too," said the Far Away Lady, smiling into his foolish face.

"I had two clocks in China," went on the beaming Stafford and I had them with me wherever I was stationed. The transportation of such things was a nuisance, but they paid their way. One was a pretty clock with a softly beaming face, who struck the hours with a delightful chime. The other was a little alarm clock, and he was noisy and tough. He was a profligate. He became confidential with me, but there was always a certain reservation. Our souls never got absolutely close together, but he was a bulwark and a brother. He was all there. The charming clock with the chime I called St. Cecelia, and the little tough clock I called Billy. Sweetheart, you can hardly imagine what a comfort the two were to me. Away off there in the gray wastes of a vast territory, an engineer solving his problems practically alone, longing occasionally for companionship and finding it not among the alien Russian assistants or among the flat-faced Celestial laborers—well, then I'd go in to St. Cecelia and Billy, and she would console softly and Billy would tick and swear with me in the most intimate companionship and understanding, and brace me up. Why, my girl, that clock was my right hand man and my adviser. I don't suppose he really advised, but he was somehow, always on deck. Billy and St. Cecelia are both in my baggage now."

"Billy appeals to me," said the lady. "Did he always awaken you?"

"No," admitted Stafford, "I was usually awakened by the racket of the coolies. Their clatter and chatter made them worse than sparrows. It wasn't Billy's utility as an alarm clock which endeared him, but a sort of personal affection which developed in me because he really deserved it. We were drawn together. St. Cecelia and I respected and admired each other, but Billy was such a flagrant fellow and whooped it up so when he struck that I got rather to lean upon him when I had anything approaching the blues. I had them, sometimes," said he more slowly and looking at her earnestly, "but Billy always sounded a note of reckless plunging ahead and hopefulness."

Here he stopped talking, apparently seized with a sudden inspiration. Then, after a moment, he went on in the most casual manner: "By the way, dear, why can't we have Billy in the kitchen of the Shack? His hands show clearly against his face and he'd be excessively good to boil eggs by."

The fair countenance of the woman became suffused and the depths of her eyes were suddenly peopled beyond all the vision of any fate-reader's crystal. All the nymphs of love and sweet regard were there. She, like him, had been dreaming much of the Shack since their parting of the night before, and the knowledge that he also had been thinking of it, was something wonderful to her. He, too, then had been having fancies about the Shack, the dream home by the side of the water, the vision of the past, the certainty, now, of the future. They would never abandon that idea. And now there came to her—she could see nothing else—the miserable scene of the years past, the shore and the blue lake waters and the man with bursting heart drawing a picture which was at the time indeed a fantasy, talking bravely, seeking to hide his own suffering and make hers less, to gloss over the hard aspect of the parting, —and failing miserably.

She reached her hand across and put it in that of Stafford:

"We will have Billy and St. Cecelia both," she whispered.

Now these were not young people in their 'teens nor in the early twenties, yet they said and did what is now being told of them. Is the gold of the world, are all its great passions and vast affection, but for the callow!

"There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four," saith the venerable and justly popular author of Proverbs, and he concludes and crowns the list with "the way of a man with a maid." He might have made the same comment regarding the way of a maid with a man, but either way is insignificant in comparison with the ways of an intelligent man and woman in the full flux and prime of life, and who have learned. There is a difference indescribable between youth and those who have come to the understanding comprehension of what is the greatest thing in the world. They own the consciousness of its magnitude, a knowledge which the others lack. Talk about love-making! Theirs is the unconscious, intense and honest art of the old masters.

He dawdled on in his day dream: "You know about the dogs, don't you?"—she nodded —"and we'll have chickens, of course, far from the house and garden, snow-white Leghorns, since they lay voraciously—'voracious' is the word—and eggs are the spice of life. There'll be other things to eat, too, and in sunny cleared places in the wood there will be the most voluptuous asparagus and strawberry beds in the world, and, as for the eye and nose, your own flower garden, near the Shack,—Have we not talked of it, somewhere, before?—what a garden that will be! I know it already, because I know your fancies. No park gardening there, but the natural beauty and abandon of nature with a friend at hand. I can shut my eyes and see the roses and the dahlias and the hollyhocks and the old-fashioned pinks and the lilacs and all the old flowers and shrubs and a host of the newer ones which have won a deserved place since Plymouth Rock and Jamestown, and there is in my nostrils a blending of perfumes that makes any mention of Araby the Blest seem puerile, while the desert that 'shall rejoice and blossom as the rose' will be but as a sand spit compared with our responsive but untamed estate.

"And," he continued, "there is a fad of my own which I have not yet mentioned. I am going to be a benefactor of mankind—I suppose it was in me and had to come out—and our jungle home will afford the opportunity for carrying out my beneficent designs. I am going to make a domestic bird of one of the most desirable of birds existent. I refer to the quail, the bird that whistles on country fences and doesn't on toast. I'm going to get a lot of them and treat them as if they were and had always been part of the family. They shall have a great wire-covered range and all conveniences of an outdoor home, and I'm going to keep on raising them and experimenting and trying until I have a really tame quail, one with atrophied wings and a trusting heart. That we'll do, dear, and coming generations shall rise up and call us blessed."

She looked upon him still indulgently. It was all concerning their life across the lake, and slight wonder was it that she was at one with him in his dreaming, he the man of action, the man with the sense of humor and perception of the grotesque, who always laughed at things,—that he should thus idle so happily in fancy with the Shack and its surroundings, well, she felt in its fullness love's compliment to her. She knew the keynote of it all and but encouraged him with speaking eyes. He was looking out of the window now but he turned to her in a moment:

"It seems to me," he said, "that we are already getting a little of the flavor of our own country. I'll be imagining the Pines of Saginaw next. Look out upon that expanse of snow." —The train was tearing down through the Des Moines valley now—"That is snow, real snow, no tremendous, swirling, threatening drifts, no dead expanse with bare, bleak spots, but instead, a great soft mantle, protecting the germs of the coming crops and the ally, not the enemy of man. How white it is, as it has a right to be. It means well. It is cold, but it is second cousin to the seeds and to our own kind of spring. It is well connected."

There was something to the lover's dreams and vaporings. The quality of earth and air was changing imperceptibly but surely. The spirit of the Lake Region was abroad and had wandered even into Iowa.

The shadows of the telegraph poles, slanting eastward, became longer and longer. Stafford, abandoning reluctantly his pictures of the future when the two should be together, laughed quietly:

"Will you always be so patient?" he asked.

She laughed as well: "I'm afraid, big boy, that there does not live a wise woman who cares who would not be always patient listening when the theme was such and the object such. Did I not say that ponderously and nicely?" she added. And he but laughed again.

They made their way to the Cassowary, for there were many hand-shakings and genial partings in progress there and the two were, necessarily, a part of the scene. More than one lasting friendship had been formed in the luxurious Cassowary.

Evening was near. Already the Pillar of Cloud by day looming above the shore of the great lake was plainly visible. The slower way through the city was made, the train came to a stand-still and upon the ears of its inmates broke all the varied station sounds, the calls of starters, the clangor of engine bells, the trucks and the shouting of cabmen outside.

Stafford assisted the Far Away Lady—the Far Away Lady no longer—to alight from the platform:

"The harshness is over," he said. "We will never part again."

"Never," she said, and then, "It has been a long time."

She had brightened her grey traveling dress with a rose-colored ribbon at her throat, and her cheeks were rose-colored, too.

"I would have come sooner, had I known," said the man.

And they went out into the world together.

THE END

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